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RIDE IN THE PADDOCK.

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MARGARET CRAVEN;

OR,

BEAUTY OF THE HEART.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST KEY," "THE GOLDEN MUSHROOM,"
AND THE "LITTLE WATERCRESS SELLERS."

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MARGARET CRAVEN;

OR,

BEAUTY OF THE HEART.

CHAPTER I.

NOT many years ago there stood, at a little distance from the dusty high road which passed through a quiet agricultural village in one of the midland counties of England, a pretty-looking house, known, from the circumstance of its having a thatched roof, by the name of "The Thatched Cottage." Over the front, as well as from the rustic porch, hung clematis, roses, and other climbing plants. Against one end was trained a large apricot tree, which, every summer might be seen thickly studded with rich golden fruit, while over the other ran a

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grape vine, reaching almost to the top of the tall kitchen chimney, on the sides of which the finest clusters of grapes were always to be found. At the front of the house was the lawn, laid out very prettily, with gravel walks and beds of flowers; at the back were the small kitchen garden and the poultry yard.

Such was the home of Mrs. Shirley and her little niece, Margaret Craven. Here it was that Margaret's life had been spent ever since she could remember; for, though not an orphan, she had never known her parents. They had left England for India when she was very young, leaving her under the care of Mrs. Shirley, who was a widowed sister of Mr. Craven's. They did not then expect that their absence would exceed two or three years, but, from one cause or other, it had been so much extended, that Margaret, though she often talked of them, had from being repeatedly told that they were coming, and being then disappointed, at length almost ceased to expect that she should ever have any other home than the Thatched Cottage.

Mrs. Shirley had no children of her own, but faithfully did she fulfil a mother's duties towards her brother's child, at the same time lavishing upon her an affection which a mother's love could hardly have surpassed; and Margaret, in return, loved her with all the warmth and devotion of an affectionate and confiding nature, hidden, though it was, from those who did not know her well, by manners timid, reserved, and retiring. She loved her parents, too, but it was in a different way; it was as we love those whom we feel we ought to love, but whom we have never seen, and of whom we know but little. Mrs. Shirley herself conducted her education, carefully instilling into her young heart lessons of faith, truth, and holiness, and early leading her to the feet of that Saviour in whom she herself trusted, and whose example it was her own daily endeavour humbly to follow. The more ornamental parts of education were not neglected, but they were esteemed by Mrs. Shirley at their proper value; and, while pursuing them, Margaret was taught

never to forget that they would adorn her only for a time, while the love and favour of God, which, conscious of her own unworthiness, she must seek, by a true faith in Christ, with constant denial of self, and a daily endeavour, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk in the way of his commandments, would be her portion for ever. Thus instructed, it was no wonder that Margaret's was a happy childhood, her home a happy home. She had, it is true, no companions of her own age beyond the few young people who were occasional visitors at Mrs. Shirley's house, but she needed them not, for in her aunt she ever found a ready sharer in all her little sorrows, a glad companion in all her joys, and she wished for no other. Things had gone on in this way until the time when our story commences, at which period Margaret had just entered her eleventh year.

It was one bright morning in early spring, Mrs. Shirley was preparing breakfast, and Margaret was standing at the window, scattering crumbs for the robins, and re-

gretting that they were now growing too independent to care for them, when the postman made his appearance, walking quickly up the gravel walk which led to the house.

"Aunt Ellen," exclaimed Margaret, "there's the postman; shall I go and get the letter?" and, without waiting for a reply, she ran to the door, and quickly returned with a letter in her hand. "It's an Indian letter, aunt Ellen," said she; "I wonder if there's a little one inside for me."

But Margaret soon saw that there was not, and that she must consequently be contented to take her news second-hand. She was well accustomed to read her aunt's countenance, and soon saw, by the change in it, ere she had read the first page, that the letter contained some unexpected intelligence.

"Margaret, my love," said she, "here is good news for you in this letter, your papa and mamma are coming home at last."

"Coming home, aunt Ellen?" exclaimed Margaret, and for some reason, quite unknown to herself, she burst into tears.

"Yes, dear, your papa says that they will be here in a few months; but why do you weep, Margaret; you are glad, are you not?"

"Yes," said Margaret, "I am glad, at least I think I am; I ought to be glad, ought I not, aunt Ellen?"

"Yes, dear, certainly you ought; you ought to love your papa and mamma better than any one else."

"Not better than you, aunty dear, ought I?" said Margaret, twining her arms round her aunt's neck and affectionately kissing her; "at least, not till I have seen them; I don't think I can, aunt Ellen, love them better than I do you."

"We shall see when they come," said Mrs. Shirley, smiling and kissing her again; "at all events, I do not think they will mind your loving me too, though they mean to take you away from me."

"Take me away from you?" repeated Margaret, "I never thought of that; could not they and Ada come and live here too?"

"I do not think it is very likely that they could, Margaret; but you are not going yet,

so we will not talk about it now, we will have our breakfast."

Margaret obeyed this restriction for a little while, but her thoughts were still busy on the same subject. She noticed too that her aunt had not taken any thing for her breakfast but an occasional sip of coffee. Presently she looked up in the midst of eating her egg, and laying down her spoon said—

"Aunt Ellen, I am afraid I am not so glad as I ought to be."

"You will be glad by and by, dear Margaret."

"Well, perhaps I shall, but somehow it seems as if I could not be glad to go away from you, not even to papa and mamma, and Ada. I do like this old house so too, and the garden, and the chickens, and poor old Tiney, and everything else." Then, after a pause, she continued, "I suppose, aunt Ellen, that papa and mamma will have a much finer house than this to live in?"

"I should think it most likely, or they will not have a very fine one," replied Mrs. Shirley, again smiling.

"But fine houses don't make people happy," remarked Margaret in a wise tone.

"Nor do they make them *un*happy," replied Mrs. Shirley. "You remember what your little hymn says, Margaret, that—

'Happiness dwells in the temper within,
And not in the outward estate.'"

"Is mamma like you, aunt Ellen?" was Margaret's next question.

"No, she is much taller, and when I knew your mamma, Margaret, she was very beautiful."

"Then I suppose Ada is beautiful too, as she has always lived with mamma."

"I do not know that that would follow as a matter of course," said Mrs. Shirley, smiling; "however, once when your papa wrote, I remember that he said Ada was very like your mamma."

"I am not at all beautiful, am I, aunt Ellen?" said Margaret, glancing, as she spoke, at the chimney glass opposite.

"God has not seen fit to give you any large share of outward beauty, my child," replied Mrs. Shirley; "but if you strive for

it, you may gain a kind of beauty which is of far greater value. Mere beauty of face and form, unless there be love to Christ, with goodness and virtue within, is as worthless as it is short-lived and deceptive; but beauty of the heart and mind can make even the plainest face attractive, and will still retain its bloom when outward beauty is faded and gone."

"Do you think Ada is good, aunt Ellen?" said Margaret.

"I hope, dear Margaret, she may have learned to love and obey the Lord Jesus; certainly I know of nothing in her to the contrary. I hope that she and you will be sisters in Christ, and in all that is good and excellent, as well as sisters in name."

"It will be very nice to have a sister certainly, won't it?" said Margaret. "We can learn our lessons together, and play together, and save up our money to make clothes for the infant school children: yes, all that will be very nice, only I wish Ada could come and live here for you to teach us, aunt Ellen; don't you think papa and mamma would let her?"

Mrs. Shirley sighed deeply as she answered that she thought such a thing was not likely. Margaret heard the sigh, but she little suspected its cause. She did not know that at that moment her aunt was taking a glance into the future, and that she sighed as she thought of the many temptations to err from the right path, which she feared might be in store for the child whom she had so long loved and cherished as her own.

Mrs. Shirley was, as we have said, a sincere Christian, and had endeavoured to bring Margaret up in accordance with the principles by which her own actions were guided. Her brother, though he both loved and admired her for her goodness, differed widely from her on the topics which in her eyes were all-important; while his wife, unless greatly changed from what she once was, she knew to be a thorough woman of the world, leading a sort of butterfly existence which fashionable life demands, and as unfitted for the task as she was unlikely to make the attempt to lead Margaret onward in the path in which her footsteps had hitherto been directed. She

sighed, too, as she thought of the difficult position in which the poor child would be placed, well knowing that many things which she had hitherto been taught to look upon as wrong or even sinful, because they were so in God's sight, would, in her father's house, not only be lightly regarded, but even spoken of with admiration, while the amiabilities and excellencies of her disposition, which she had so carefully nourished and fostered as lovely flowers, hereafter to blossom in beauty and fragrance, would meet with no encouragement, but on the contrary would, she feared, soon be suffered either to run waste, or be left to be overgrown with unlovely and hurtful weeds, whose seeds, notwithstanding all the pains she had hitherto taken to destroy them, she well knew still remained within her heart.

"But it is wrong of me, very wrong," thought she, as she sat thus meditating within herself, "to be thus distrustful of the love and care of my heavenly Father; cannot he who kept Noah in the midst of an ungodly world, who watched over Daniel, surrounded as he was by all the pomp and splendour of

a court, keep her, too, safe from harm, and unspotted by the world? Can he not, will he not, grant her the aid of his Spirit, to keep her back from sin, and to enable her to withstand temptation, in one place as well as in another? I have, it is true, guided her hitherto, but I have been but the instrument in his hand; why should I grieve that she is to be taken from me? How can I tell but that it may be for some wise and good end, which I am not yet permitted to see? I will pray for greater faith, and strive to leave her unmurmuringly in his hands to do what seemeth him good."

CHAPTER II.

Six months had passed away, and now Margaret had been folded in the arms of her long absent parents, had received the first kiss of her beautiful sister Ada, and had heard endless accounts of the new home to which she was soon to go. Mrs. Shirley was busy making preparations for her departure; as for Margaret, she did not know, as she herself said, whether she felt happy or unhappy, glad or sorry. In the short interview she had had with them, her papa and mamma seemed very kind and good; and Ada—yes, she liked Ada very much, and she should like to go and live with them all, because it was right that she should live with them; but then she did not like leaving her aunt Ellen and the Thatched Cottage; she could not like that if she tried ever so much. Her papa had

taken a beautiful house near London, and Ada said that they were to have everything in the world that they wanted; that would certainly be very nice, but then aunt Ellen, —well, aunt Ellen would of course come very often to see them, and they should, of course, go to see her; this was a bright thought, and with it Margaret at length tried to comfort herself as well as she could.

The last day on which she could call the thatched cottage her home, came. The next morning her papa would be there to take her away. Margaret had spent the afternoon in going with her aunt to say good-bye to a few friends in the neighbourhood, as well as to the old women in the almshouses, with whom she was a great favourite, and in paying a last visit to the infant school, to distribute among the children a few little pinafores, which she had saved up her money to buy, and which she had been busily employed in making for the last fortnight.

"After tea, aunt Ellen," said she, as they walked home, "I shall have to pack up my

work-box, and then I shall have done everything."

"And I shall finish knitting your muffatees," replied her aunt, "and then I shall have done everything."

Tea had not been long over before Margaret's work-box was brought out. She arranged and re-arranged the contents many times, before she could place them entirely to her satisfaction; at length she declared that she should not take them out any more. "Look, aunt Ellen," she said, turning round to her aunt at whose side she was sitting, "do you not think this will do?"

Mrs. Shirley had not spoken for some time, and as Margaret uttered the words she saw three or four bright tears fall down on the muffatee which she was just completing. She jumped off her seat, and throwing her arms round her aunt's neck exclaimed—

"Aunt Ellen, dear aunty, don't cry, I wish I was not going away, I wish I might stay with you; but I will ask papa to bring me to see you very often, I will indeed; and I shall never forget you; I will think of you

every day, and I will love you too, oh! so very much!"

"You are a dear child," said Mrs. Shirley, fondly pressing her to her bosom; "I know you will love me, Margaret, and remember me; and will you try to remember all I have taught you as well?"

"Yes, *indeed* I will, aunt Ellen; I will remember everything, I will never do any thing that I think you would not like."

"That is, if you can help it, my dear child. But remember that you must not trust to your own strength to do what is right."

"No," said Margaret, "I must ask God to help me; I will remember that too."

"And you will try to please God, Margaret. It is right of you to try to please me, and to please your papa and mamma, but first of all you must try to please God; for sometimes, you know, the things which please him do not please others who are very dear to us."

Margaret looked up, as if she did not at all understand what her aunt meant. "Don't they?" she said.

"No, my love. I mean that all do not think alike; what some people think to be very wrong, others consider there is no harm in; so that, if we are guided only by a desire to please our fellow creatures, we may sometimes go very wrong; whereas, if we strive to do only those things which please God, and ask him to help us, we shall be quite sure of going right."

"I think I understand what you mean, aunt Ellen; you mean that if anybody I loved very much were to wish me to do things which I knew displeased God, and I did not do them, I should be quite certain that *I* was right and *they* were wrong."

"Exactly; but I hope, dear Margaret, that you will never be placed in such a case."

"Oh, no!" said Margaret, as if she thought such a thing quite impossible. "I was only supposing, you know. Do you think, aunt Ellen," she continued, "that mamma will teach Ada and me the same as you have done?"

"I think it most likely that you will

have a governess," replied her aunt; "but, of course, you will be as obedient to her, Margaret, and attend to all she says, as you would to me or your mamma."

"Yes," said Margaret; "but I hope she will be very kind, and teach me as you have done, and Ada. I wonder if Ada likes learning as much as I do."

"If she does not, you must try to like it better," said Mrs. Shirley. "She is nearly two years younger than you are, remember, and therefore you must set her a good example, not only in learning, but in other things."

"In other things, aunt Ellen?" said Margaret, inquiringly.

"Yes, you must be kind, and gentle, and forgiving towards her, making allowances for her faults, if you expect her to make allowance for yours."

"Do you think Ada has faults, then, aunt?" said Margaret.

"She would be a very wonderful child if she had not," replied her aunt. "Do you not recollect those verses in the Bible which

MARGARET AND AUNT ELLEN.

say, 'There is none righteous, no, not one'—'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'?"*

"Yes, I recollect that," said Margaret; "but I hope Ada is not ill-natured."

"I certainly should think that there is little reason to fear that, at least, from her appearance, Margaret; but, of course, you must expect to have sometimes to give way to her; you cannot expect to have things run on so smoothly when there is the will of another to consult, as when you can follow your own inclination without any one to contradict you."

"I do not think I shall mind giving up to Ada, if she will give up to me sometimes in return," said Margaret.

"Then you must, as I said before, being the elder, set her the example, striving yourself to follow Him, who left 'us an example that we should follow his steps,' and remembering the words of the apostle, when he says, 'Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as

* Rom. iii, 10, 23.

God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.' "*

Margaret sat for some little time in silence on her aunt's knee; she seemed to be thinking: at last she said, as if thinking aloud—

"I wonder what old Goody Mills will do without me to go and tell her the texts on Sundays."

"I suppose I must go and take them to her instead; do you think that will do?" said her aunt smiling.

"Oh, yes! that will do very nicely if you will, aunt Ellen; but I shall miss poor old Goody too. I wonder if there are any almshouses, or any Infant School, where mamma lives. Ada said she had never heard of one; was not that funny? But I suppose they don't have Infant Schools in India?"

"Very likely not," said Mrs. Shirley; "at least not in all parts; but you must not expect to find everything in your new home that you have been accustomed to here, Margaret. You will have so many fresh

* 1 Pet. ii, 21; Eph. iv, 32.

pleasures that you must make up your mind to lose some of the old ones."

"Yes," said Margaret, thoughtfully; "only I should like an Infant School. I was thinking, aunt Ellen, that if there should not be one, I shall have too much pocket money. I shall not know what to do with what I used to save for our little children, and for the old women's tea and sugar at Christmas."

"Well, you had better wait and see; there are always plenty of good uses to which money can be applied."

"Only I shall not have you to tell me," said Margaret. "Aunt Ellen," she exclaimed suddenly, "would it not be a nice plan if I might write to you sometimes, and if you would write to me, and tell me all about everything?"

"A very nice plan indeed; I was going to propose it if you had not thought of it, Margaret. You can write to me as often as your mamma will allow you, and tell me everything you do, and all about yourself."

"Oh! how very pleasant that will be! and then I shall have a letter back from

you. But, aunt Ellen," she added, speaking in a lower tone, and putting her face closer to her aunt's, "suppose I should be tempted to do what is wrong, as I am now sometimes, may I tell you that, too?"

"Yes; you may tell me that, too, my love; but remember to tell it to God also. Remember that you must go to him and confess to him all your faults, asking his forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ your Saviour. And you should ask those also against whom you have offended to forgive you."

"Yes; I will indeed," said Margaret, "and I will ask the Holy Spirit to help me to be good. Aunt Ellen, do you know, I think if it were not for you I should often be a great deal naughtier than I am. I seem sometimes to feel as if I liked to be naughty."

"Do you know what it is that makes you feel so, Margaret?"

"No, aunt, not exactly; I know it is God's Holy Spirit that makes us wish to be good, and puts good thoughts in our wicked hearts; and I know we all have wicked hearts."

"And Satan, the wicked Spirit, puts wicked thoughts into our hearts. We learn from the Bible that Satan seeks to destroy souls by tempting them to sin that they may be lost for ever."

"That is very dreadful," said Margaret. "I will try always to think of it when I feel as if I should like to be wicked again. But people cannot help doing wrong things sometimes, can they, aunt Ellen?"

"Not of themselves, as I told you before, Margaret; but by God's help they can. It is only when we neglect to ask for, and trust to, this help, that he permits us to fall into sin; for the Bible expressly tells us that God 'will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.'* You know what that means, Margaret."

"Yes, aunt, I think I do; it means, does it not, that if Satan tempts us to do a wrong thing, and we feel as if we should very much like to do it, yet if we ask God he will help us not to do it, as he helped me not to take

* 1 Cor. x, 13.

that large peach off the garden wall, though I had got my hand on it and was almost going to pick it last summer."

"And when I was in the summer-house watching you, though you did not know it until afterwards," said her aunt smiling, "and saw you run off indoors, as if you were frightened."

"Well, I was frightened," said Margaret, "so frightened lest I might go back again; and oh, I remember I felt so thankful when I went to bed at night, and thought that I had not done it. I know it was God who helped me not to take it; I recollect so well just how I felt when my fingers touched the peach. I seemed to feel all in a moment that he was looking at me, and then I seemed in my heart to ask him to help me, and then I ran away."

Mrs. Shirley folded her once more in her arms, and Margaret felt the warm soft tears fall upon her face as she said, "God bless you, my darling child; and ever grant you his mighty aid in every temptation to which you may be exposed."

CHAPTER III.

When Margaret awoke two mornings after, she looked around in amazement, and it was some moments before she could recollect how it was that she found herself in a place so different from her own little room, papered with green, at the Thatched Cottage. By degrees she recalled the different circumstances of the previous day, finally recollecting that she had been too tired and weary to take notice of anything when she came to bed. She now saw that the room was much more elegantly furnished than any of her aunt's rooms at the Thatched Cottage had been, and that the two little beds which it contained, as well as the windows, were hung with sky blue damask. She pushed the curtain of her own bed aside, and saw her sister Ada fast

asleep in the other. Ada, at that moment, looked very beautiful, and Margaret was so attracted by her appearance, that she slid out of bed, and, creeping silently towards her, imprinted one gentle kiss upon her cheek. The child woke, and rubbed her face with a gesture of impatience.

"It was only I, Ada dear," said Margaret; "won't you give me another kiss?"

"I thought it was a mosquito," said Ada; and, again closing her eyes, she was soon fast asleep.

Margaret did not think this a very gracious salutation; for though she was not quite so well acquainted with mosquitos as Ada, she knew that they had stings, and she did not at all like her first kiss being taken for a sting of any sort. However, she forgave Ada, supposing her to be, as she really was, very sleepy, and amused herself by making a quiet tour of the room, and peeping out under the corners of the blinds to see what the outside view might be. Then she again crept into bed, and employed herself, until the servant came to

call them, in counting the little silken bobs which hung down from the fringe around her bed.

Susan (for this Margaret discovered the servant's name to be) had some difficulty in arousing Ada, and still more in inducing her to get up, and Margaret, who had always been accustomed to treat her aunt's servants with proper respect, could not help feeling astonished at the manner in which Ada, as soon as she began to dress, ordered Susan about, never condescending to thank her for any of the services she performed. At length they were both dressed, Margaret having had to wait some time before her frock could be fastened, on account of Ada's insisting upon wearing one which she had torn, and which Susan was consequently obliged to sit down and mend.

"Now," said Ada, "let us go down, and I will show you the new pony."

"But we have not said our prayers yet," said Margaret.

"Oh, no more we have; but we can say them afterwards. Come along," said Ada.

"I would rather say mine now," said Margaret, drawing back.

"Very well," said Ada, "it will soon be over, to be sure," and she knelt down by the foot of her bed.

Margaret knelt down by the side of hers, but did not rise for a long time after her sister.

"What a time you are," said Ada, "I could have said my prayers twenty times while you have been saying yours. I always make great haste with my prayers."

"But that is not right," replied Margaret; "we ought not to be in a hurry when we are speaking to God."

Ada gave her an amazed look, and they went down stairs together. Mr. Craven was in the breakfast room; he kissed them both, and upon Ada inquiring about the new pony, he said he would take them to see it himself, at the same time forbidding them ever to go into the stable alone. As they were going along he looked at Margaret and said, "Why, Margaret, you are not a bit like Ada; you are something like your

aunt Ellen, but I hope you're not so good as she is," he added, in a half joking way.

"No; I am not nearly so good as aunt Ellen," said Margaret, very seriously.

"Well, I am very glad of it, my dear," said her papa, apparently amused at her answer; "you would be a great deal too good for me if you were. I don't think your aunt Ellen was ever a naughty girl once in her life."

"But I have been naughty many times," said Margaret, in the same serious way.

"So much the better, my dear; I tell you, you would be too good for me if you had not."

"But, papa," said Margaret, looking up to his face, "don't you like good people? I love aunt Ellen dearly."

"So do I, Margaret," he replied, seeing that he had gone a little too far; "and I hope you always will love her, for I am sure she deserves it."

Margaret felt satisfied that her papa had only been joking; and as they had now

arrived at the stable door, the pony, a beautiful little cream-coloured creature, soon drew their attention from other subjects. Ada was impatient for a ride. Margaret stood by and admired.

"Margaret must have the first ride, she is the eldest," said Mr. Craven, drawing her forward as soon as the side saddle was adjusted, but Ada endeavoured to mount, and said that she would have the first. "I don't mind, papa," said Margaret, as her father attempted to pull Ada down. "I can have a ride afterwards."

"Aunt Ellen all over," murmured Mr. Craven to himself, but he allowed Ada to have the first ride nevertheless.

When they returned to the house Mrs. Craven was down and waiting breakfast for them. She kissed Margaret, and after asking her how she liked the new pony, bade her and Ada stand up together that she might see the difference in their height.

"Ada is nearly as tall as you, Margaret," said she, "although she is more than a year and a half younger. I am afraid you have a

habit of stooping, you have not begun dancing I can see."

Margaret replied that she had no dancing master at her aunt Ellen's, upon which her mother said that Ada had learned some time, and could already dance very well. "You must begin too," said she; "your new governess will be here next week: she is a very accomplished lady, and I hope you will both of you be good girls, and make the most of her instructions."

After breakfast, Ada, who seemed to delight in being of importance, took Margaret all over the grounds, then into the different parts of the house. "And now," said she, "we will go upstairs, and I will show you all my frocks and pretty things, and afterwards, when Susan has unpacked your boxes, I can see yours."

The room was soon strewn with articles of dress of every description. Ada evidently took great pride in displaying her finery; Margaret remarked that she thought some of her frocks were very pretty.

"Yes," said Ada, "those are what I wear

when there is company, and I go in to dessert after dinner; you will have to go as well now, but I suppose you haven't any frocks so handsome as these."

"No," replied Margaret; "aunt Ellen never wears such smart things herself, so she did not buy them for me. I always used to wear white in the evening, if aunt had any friends."

"Ah! but you won't now; mamma likes to see people nicely dressed, and of course you will have the same things that I do," said Ada, in a patronizing way.

"Shall we fold all these up now, and put them away again?" said Margaret, who really began to feel quite tired of looking at so many dresses.

"Oh, no! Susan can do that," said Ada; "I never fold up my own things."

"But she is unpacking my boxes," replied Margaret; "besides, Ada, we pulled them all out to amuse ourselves, and it is not fair that she should have to put them away again."

"Why not?" said Ada; "she's my ser-

vant — *our* servant, at least," she added, correcting herself; "what's the use of her if she is not to wait upon us?"

This was quite a new style of things to Margaret, and Ada shortly after going down stairs, she took the opportunity of asking Susan if she could assist her in taking the things out of her trunks.

"Thank you, Miss," replied Susan, "if you would come to these drawers and show me how you like your things put, it would save me the trouble of altering them afterwards; Miss Ada is so very particular about hers."

"I am very sorry, Susan," said Margaret, as she helped to place some of her things in the drawer, "that you will have the trouble of putting away all Ada's things, for she only got them out to show me; I would fold them up myself only I do not exactly know how she would like them done."

"I don't think it will ever be a trouble to me to do anything for you, Miss Margaret," said Susan. She would have added,

"I wish Miss Ada were like you;" but thought she had better leave the words unsaid. Margaret thanked her for her kindness, and then said, "Shall you want this little top drawer for anything, Susan?"

Susan thought not; upon which Margaret added, "Then I think I should like to keep my books in it; Ada says that there is a book case in the school-room, where I can put them, but I would rather keep some of them here—my Bible, and Prayer Book, and Hymn Book, and a few other little books; they will be easier for me to get at; my Bible, you know, I shall want every night."

"Every night, Miss?" said Susan, in a tone of slight astonishment.

"Yes," said Margaret. "I always read a chapter, or part of one, to my aunt Ellen every night before I went to bed, and she used to explain it to me; but she said, that as she thought mamma might very often be engaged, and not able to hear me, I had better make it a rule always to read to myself now, for fear of missing sometimes."

When Susan went down stairs she told her fellow-servants that she thought Miss Margaret much too good for that house, and that it was a pity she had ever come into it.

With Margaret the day passed quickly away; there was so much to hear, and so many things to see, that she thought she should never come to the end of them; yet amidst all, true to her promise of never forgetting her aunt Ellen, her thoughts many times wandered back to the Thatched Cottage, and in her heart was a fond, half regretful recollection of the happiness she had left behind her there. When bed-time came, Ada was dreadfully sleepy, she having, on the strength of its being Margaret's first day at home, petitioned to be allowed to sit up an hour later than usual. Margaret was tired too, but as soon as they were undressed, she threw her dressing gown around her, and taking out her Bible, sat down and began to read.

"What are you about, Margaret," said Ada; "why do you not get into bed? I want to go to sleep."

"I am only reading a little, Ada dear," replied Margaret, "I shall not disturb you if you go to sleep."

"But I cannot go to sleep while the light's burning," said Ada, pettishly; "and you cannot want to read to-night; there will be plenty of time to-morrow."

"There, Miss Ada, you cannot see the light now, if I draw the curtain," said Susan; "so go to sleep like a good girl."

But Ada kept on talking and grumbling, so that at last Margaret was obliged to close her book and put it back in the drawer. She then went up to Ada's bed to wish her good night. "Susan can put the light out now, Ada," said she, "but please do not talk to me for a little while, dear; I am going to say my prayers."

Ada's sleepiness alone prevented her non-compliance with this request, and Margaret, her thoughts in a complete whirl, and her heart full of new and strange feelings, knelt down to pray. After a while her ideas became more collected, and she prayed earnestly that God would bless all who

were dear to her, her father and mother, her dear sister Ada, and last, but not least, her beloved aunt Ellen. She prayed for herself too, that she might be enabled, by the Holy Spirit's help, to put all her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, to love God and to keep his commandments, that she might be watered with the dew of his grace while here on earth, and finally received, through the merits of her Saviour, into the everlasting kingdom which he has prepared for those who love him.

When she rose from her knees, Susan, who was still in the room, whispered, "It takes you longer than your sister to say your prayers, Miss Margaret."

"Yes," said Margaret; "because you know, Susan, I have so many things to ask for; but I don't the least mind being in the dark another night, if it keeps you too long, Susan."

"No, Miss Margaret, I would not mind waiting twice as long for you," she replied, as she helped her into bed. "I would not have put the candle out, only I knew

Miss Ada would go grumbling to your mamma."

"Thank you, Susan," said Margaret, "I am very much obliged to you for being so kind to me; you have tucked me up just as aunt Ellen used; she always came to kiss me every night after I was in bed." And two or three tears dropped on Margaret's pillow as she thought how long it might be before she should see that dear face bending over her again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE sabbath had indeed ever been "The Pearl of Days" in the Thatched Cottage. Margaret had generally been accustomed to accompany her aunt immediately after their early breakfast to the Sunday school, where she stood by her side as she taught her class. They then went to church.

In the afternoon it was always Mrs. Shirley's practice to assemble around her as many as chose to come, and the number was frequently not small, of the children of the little farmers, and others in the village, who considered themselves just a grade too high to attend the parochial school. With these she read the Bible, explaining the more difficult parts, and encouraging them to its study, by many little plans of her own. Sometimes Margaret joined this class,

but more frequently she went to the alms houses close by, to read for an hour or two to blind Goody Mills, the expected loss of whose society we found her regretting. In the evening they went to church again, and the day was closed with pleasant and useful conversation, or a little reading, and, finally, evening worship. To Margaret it was always a happy one, but she was now destined to spend her Sundays in a very different way.

In Mr. Craven's house breakfast was always late on Sunday morning; so late, that Mrs. Craven was often late at church, too, in consequence of it. Mr. Craven accompanied her there sometimes, but only sometimes. It was one of his opinions, that as people who went to church were often quite as wicked as those who stayed at home, there was very little use in attending church at all; and so, instead of going in the hope of growing better, he remained away, and grew, if not worse, at least, more careless and indifferent.

On the first Sunday morning of her

residence at home, Margaret noticed that new frocks and bonnets were laid out for her and Ada, much smarter than any she had ever yet worn. Ada was delighted, and spent much time in looking at herself in the glass; but Margaret, to say the truth, felt rather out of her element. When they joined their mamma at the hall door, where the carriage was waiting for them, she looked at them both with evident satisfaction, and said, "You do look a little fit to be seen now, Margaret; I can't think how your aunt could have dressed you in such dingy things; but make haste, and get into the carriage, or we shall be too late."

Margaret, however, did not like her new dress any the better for hearing her aunt's taste so disparagingly spoken of. When they came out of church, Ada made remarks on the people whom she had seen there.

"Did you see that lady that sat three pews before us," said she to Margaret, "in a blue bonnet and feathers? that was Lady F——. Mamma knows her."

"No," replied Margaret, "I did not notice her."

"You saw those two young ladies in white, then, just across the aisle; they are the Clergyman's daughters; mamma says they look regular frights in those great bonnets."

"No, I do not think I saw them," said Margaret; "I did not look across that way."

"What did you do with your eyes then?" said Ada, "I do not think you saw anybody."

"Aunt Ellen always says it's not right to look about in church," replied Margaret.

"Well, but you need not mind now what she says," said Ada.

Margaret was going to reply that she *liked* minding what her aunt said, when her mamma interrupted her by saying, "Margaret is quite right, Ada; it is extremely vulgar to stare about in church in the way you do, you never see the Miss F——s do so, and I must beg that you will correct this habit."

Ada pouted, and Margaret could not help thinking that the reason which her mamma

had assigned for its not being right to stare about in church was a very different one to that which her aunt Ellen would have given.

"There is to be company to dinner to-night," said Ada, as she and Margaret were taking off their things; "I heard mamma giving orders about the dessert; we shall have to go into the dining room after dinner."

"Company to-night?" repeated Margaret in a tone of astonishment, "why it is Sunday!"

"Well, what does that signify?" said Ada, "papa likes to have company on Sundays, it is so dull without, he says."

In the afternoon the two sisters were in the drawing-room together. Mr. Craven came in. "Come, Margaret," said he, "I have not heard you play yet, and aunt Ellen gave me a flourishing account of your music; sit down and play me a tune."

Margaret immediately went to the piano, and commenced a hymn tune. "That is not a very pretty tune, I think," said her father,

"although you played it very nicely; do you not know something rather merrier, Margaret?"

"I do not think there are any merry hymn tunes, papa," said Margaret, looking round.

"No, I don't suppose there are," said her father, "but I do not want hymn tunes; play me something else, something lively."

"But it is Sunday, papa," said Margaret timidly.

"Well, and may not people play lively tunes on Sunday?" said he; "come, sit down; I am sure you know some."

"I would rather not, papa, please," said Margaret, drawing back, as he attempted to place her again on the music stool.

"Ah! I see how it is," said her papa, "your aunt has made a regular little Methodist of you, in spite of all the directions I gave her to the contrary; has she not, Margaret?" he continued more kindly, and patting her shoulder as he spoke.

"I don't know, papa," she replied; "I don't know what a Methodist is."

"Well, and I am sure I cannot tell you," said her father; "only you need not look so scared about it, for they are very good sort of people; at least, so your aunt Ellen would say."

Soon after this Margaret went up stairs to her own room, and taking out her Bible and some of her little books began to read, feeling all the while very lonely and sad at heart indeed. She thought of her aunt Ellen, of *how* she was spending the day, and of all she had said to her about trying to please God, and that he would help her to keep in the right path if she asked him; and then she lifted up her heart to her Father in heaven and felt comforted. In a little while her father's voice was heard calling to her to come out in the garden. When she went down she found him giving Ada rides round the paddock on the new pony.

"Come, Meggie," he said, as soon as he saw her, "put away that solemn face, and have a ride. Ada is only going round once more." Margaret did not answer, but as soon as she saw that his attention was again

taken up with Ada, she slipped away and ran back to her own room.

In the evening she and Ada were both dressed with every possible care to go in to dessert. Ada was a child whom any one could love and caress; her beauty was so striking, and her manners, when she was in a good humour, so engaging, that few could help being attracted by her. Margaret's manners, on the contrary, were timid, reserved, and perhaps from her having been so unaccustomed to society, a little awkward. She was not long in feeling the difference in the notice taken of her and of Ada, by her father's guests. Ada, who had seen them all before, was petted, flattered, and caressed by every one, and laughed and talked without the least sign of bashfulness, but to Margaret they were strangers; few spoke to her, and to those few she seemed as if she could not find a single word to say in return. Often in the course of the evening she felt the tears almost ready to rise into her eyes, and oh! how often did she wish herself back again in the quiet parlour

of the Thatched Cottage, reading her evening portion of Scripture to her aunt Ellen, or singing the evening hymn, with which, and family prayer, their sabbath duties always closed.

At length, to her great relief, the time came for them to say good-night, and when Margaret laid her head upon her pillow, in the dark, gentle stillness of the night, she for the first time since she had left her aunt, indulged in the luxury of a good cry. After this, she again asked God to bless her, and a secret feeling of peace and happiness stole over her; the everlasting arms were beneath her; and she slept sweetly under the shadow of his wing, who has said, as of his vineyard, so of each, even the weakest vine planted in it, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." *

* Isa. xxvii. 3.

CHAPTER V.

THE next week Miss Gregory, the new governess, came. Margaret had built very much upon the thought of her coming; for never having been taught by any one but her aunt Ellen, an idea had taken possession of her mind that Miss Gregory would be something like her and teach like her. In this, however, she was doomed to be greatly disappointed, for Miss Gregory and Mrs. Shirley were in nearly every respect as unlike as two persons could well be. Miss Gregory was a person of stiff and rather haughty manners, and of a dashing, stylish appearance, while Mrs. Shirley, as our young readers will have concluded from what they already know of her, was exactly the opposite in all these respects.

On the day of Miss Gregory's arrival,

Margaret in the evening happened to be in the drawing-room when the governess and Mrs. Craven were talking together. Margaret had no intention of listening, but she could not avoid over-hearing what they said, although she was seated at some distance from them.

"I have brought Ada up under my own eye," said Mrs. Craven, "but Margaret, on account of her being then a delicate child, was left, when we went abroad, under the care of a sister of Mr. Craven's, who until this time has entirely conducted her education."

"Indeed!" said Miss Gregory, "she is very different in appearance from her sister."

"Oh yes; they are different in every respect," replied Mrs. Craven, "and I very much regret that we were compelled to leave Margaret so long as we did with her aunt, as, although I have no doubt that she is a most excellent person, she has given her such strange, odd notions on some points, that I fear you will have a little trouble in

getting them out of her; you may observe, too, that she is awkward in her manners, and not at all stylish in her movements; but those things I hope you will soon be able to correct."

Miss Gregory replied that she had not a doubt of it, as her two last pupils, the daughters of Sir James H——, were considered to be exceedingly awkward when she first went to them, but now every one noticed them as most graceful and elegant girls. Margaret felt that she had no right to hear any more, and with her heart all in a flutter, moved off to the farthest end of the room.

Nothing could be more contrary to the system in which Margaret had hitherto been educated than that adopted by Miss Gregory. All her endeavours were directed towards making her pupils proficient in showy and outside accomplishments, and in imparting to them what she considered fashionable and stylish manners and movements. Margaret was at first in frequent disgrace for not holding her head that way, and her shoulders

this, while Ada was as constantly commended for her superior grace and elegance. By this time Margaret had ceased to be considered as a stranger in the house, and Ada's character began to come out in its true light. Susan said, that no one, to see them together, would ever suppose that Miss Margaret was the elder, for Ada did nothing but domineer over her, and order her about, always insisting upon having her own way in everything.

At first Margaret had borne all this very amiably, but when she found that Ada considered it as a matter of course that she should always give way to her, she grew less patient, and often felt exceedingly irritated against her sister. There were other things, too, which made her at times feel very unhappy. Her father, if he did not exactly laugh at her aunt Ellen for being religious, would often throw out jests about her which Margaret could well understand, but did not at all like. She saw, too, that Ada was much more thought of and considered than herself; and though, as far

as outward circumstances went, they were treated exactly alike, yet that the place which she held in the hearts of her parents, especially of her mother, was much smaller than that assigned to Ada. Yet she loved Ada nevertheless, and tried hard not to feel envious of the love which all seemed anxious to shower down upon her.

Margaret tried hard too to banish other sinful feelings, and wrong thoughts, which she became conscious were by degrees endeavouring to obtain access to her heart, and as long as she watched and strove and prayed, she came off conqueror; but many temptations were around her, and more than once she felt herself on the point of falling, more than once her foot slipped, and she no longer stood upright in the narrow way. By slow degrees she grew less watchful over herself, and her trust in the Saviour, and the desire to please God within her heart, seemed to be less earnest than they had once been. Sinful thoughts and passions were allowed after a time to grow up unsubdued within her, and though in her

better moments she sought God's help, yet the whisperings of the Spirit in her conscience were often unheard; or, if heard, were unheeded or forgotten.

At first she had written long letters to her aunt, faithfully relating whatever happened to her, pouring, as she had been ever wont to do, all her short-comings and temptations into that faithful bosom, and receiving in return words of warning, help, or encouragement, as the case might be. Her mother took no notice of this correspondence. One day, however, she took up one of Mrs. Shirley's letters, but soon threw it down again, saying that she could not think what in the world Margaret could want to write such long letters for, if she always had such dull ones in return. But by and by Margaret's letters to her aunt became shorter and less frequent; she did not love her less, but she seemed to have less to say to her, or perhaps less that she liked to say.

Ada was for her age much more backward in her education than Margaret, and

being besides both idle and inattentive, was frequently in disgrace with Miss Gregory about her studies. Margaret, on the contrary, who, as much from inclination as habit, always performed her tasks well and punctually, was soon on that account, notwithstanding her awkward manners (which Miss Gregory, however, declared to be considerably improved), in high favour with that lady. Margaret's heart, when she heard the praises and commendations bestowed upon her, began to be lifted up, and she would feel pleased within herself that in one respect, at least, she was superior to Ada. One wrong feeling seldom finds its way into our hearts without making room for more, and as this feeling of pride kept growing within Margaret, others equally hurtful and pernicious began to spring up around it. She became less kind to Ada, less gentle and obliging in her manners towards others, less careful to obey her parents, and render them due honour. That Ada did the same was no excuse for her, and yet she made it one. "Ada does not do what mamma tells her

directly," she would say to herself sometimes, when chidden for acts of disobedience, "and mamma is not angry with her; I do not see why she should be with me."

When Miss Gregory first came, Ada, who was, as we have said, often in trouble with the tasks which she had to perform out of school hours, had always met with a ready helper in Margaret; but when Margaret found, after a time, that Ada had no inclination to return this kindness, by showing her kindness in other respects, she made up her mind that she would not help her any more, or, at least, not so often as she had done. Miss Gregory always desired that their books and other things should be arranged on the table before she came into the school-room after breakfast; this they took it in turn to do, week by week, but Ada, unless reminded of it or assisted by Margaret, as often forgot it as not; now, however, Margaret left off reminding her of this also, and the consequence was, that Ada often had a long lesson to learn as a punishment for her negligence.

"There, Miss Ada," said Miss Gregory, as she one morning crossed Ada's French exercise from top to bottom, "I desire that this exercise may be written over again before you go to bed to-night; if I do not find it properly written, and on the table to-morrow morning, you will have one double the length to write next time. I shall not remind you of it, remember; so you must recollect for yourself." When Margaret went to the closet in the evening to get her lesson books, she saw that Ada's exercise remained untouched; it would have been kind in her to have reminded her of it, and probably, had Ada been in the room, she might have said to her, "Ada, you have not written your exercise." But she would not trouble herself to seek for her. "I am sure Ada would not take so much pains for me," she said to herself, as she sat down to learn her lessons, forgetful of the beautiful precept, to "do good, hoping for nothing again."

In the morning Miss Gregory, as Margaret had expected, was very angry, and

Ada was in disgrace the whole day, while on Margaret she bestowed several little indulgences, and made a point of holding her up as an example for Ada to follow. If Margaret had received these praises with humility, and kindly endeavoured to help Ada out of her trouble, the bond of sisterly affection between them would have been more closely cemented, but she did not do either; she behaved coldly and proudly towards the humbled Ada, not only on this occasion, but on many others of a similar kind, and the consequence was that Ada began to take a dislike to her, and to delight in teasing and vexing her in every way that she could; and so the breach between them, begun by very trifles, grew wider and wider every day.

And Margaret, did she feel happy with all this? Oh no; the testimony of an approving conscience was no longer hers, and she often felt very wretched and miserable indeed. Mr. and Mrs. Craven were frequent witnesses of the disputes and bickerings which took place between her and

Ada; and more than this, Ada frequently carried to her mother exaggerated or misstated accounts of many things which Margaret had done, as she alleged, out of unkindness to her; and as Mrs. Craven seldom took the pains to examine into the matter, Margaret was very often blamed much more than she deserved, and scolded for things which were no fault of hers, while Ada's domineering and self-willed ways were taken no notice of. All these little circumstances fretted Margaret's temper, and instead of asking God, as she had at first done, to help her to bear them meekly, she went on resisting, and often returning evil for evil, thus making bad worse, and growing more unhappy every day.

CHAPTER VI.

One evening Margaret and Ada were invited to a juvenile party in the neighbourhood. Ada, who thought quite as much of her appearance as if she had been a grown-up lady, begged of her mother to let them have new frocks for the occasion. She had one day happened to overhear one of her mamma's friends say to another, "How well Ada looks in pink." But she had not a pink evening frock, and ever since then her desire had been to possess one, and Mrs. Craven, though without knowing her reason, now complied with her desire, and bought them each a rose-coloured silk, trimmed with white lace. Ada was so impatient to wear her frock that she could hardly wait for the evening to arrive. It came, however, at last. The frocks were laid out, and Susan came up to dress the sisters.

"Susan," said Ada, taking up her frock to examine it, "there is not so much lace on my frock as on Margaret's."

"I don't think there's any difference, Miss Ada," said Susan.

"Yes, there is," replied Ada, "there are two rows round Margaret's sleeves, and only one round mine; I know there's some more lace, in one of mamma's drawers, just like it; I shall go and fetch it for you to tack round for me."

Mrs. Craven happened to be out, so Margaret interposed, "Ada, I don't think mamma will like you to go to her drawers when she is out."

"Oh yes, she will," replied Ada, and off she ran, Susan fastening Margaret's frock the meanwhile.

When she returned she had the lace in one hand, and a bottle of what appeared to be scent in the other.

"Here's the lace, Susan," said she, "make haste and do it; and I've brought this scent," she added; "will you have some, Margaret?"

PREPARING FOR A VISIT.

"We may not take mamma's scent, may we?" said Margaret.

"Oh yes," replied Ada; "I asked her before she went, and she said I might take the bottle off her dressing table."

Margaret held out her handkerchief, then, putting it to her face, exclaimed, "It's not scent, Ada, I don't know what it is," and she threw down the handkerchief in disgust.

"Not scent!" exclaimed Ada, snatching up the bottle, but by some mischance it slipped from her hand, emptying its contents upon the beautiful frock which lay in Susan's lap.

"Oh, dear!" cried Ada, "what *have* I done; will it stain, Susan?"

"I'm sure I don't know what it was in the bottle," said Susan; "but yes; oh, look if it has not taken every bit of colour completely out—and such great patches too, all over the front."

"Oh! what shall I do?" said Ada, bursting into tears of vexation.

"You must wear one of your India muslin

ones, Miss Ada, with a pink sash," said Susan.

"No, I will not," cried Ada passionately; "I will not wear anything; I will not go at all."

"But you must, Ada," said Margaret; "now we have been invited."

"I will not, then," returned Ada; "and I am not going to be ordered about by you, Margaret; for though you are the eldest, nobody thinks half so much of you as they do of me."

The colour rose to Margaret's face at this unprovoked impertinence on Ada's part, and she walked away into the school-room.

"Come, Miss Ada," said Susan, coaxingly, "let me put on this white frock; I am sure it looks very nice."

"No; I will not," said Ada, "I will not go in white, and Margaret in the pretty rose-colour that I wanted so much; I do not choose her to be better dressed than I am; I would not care if she were going to wear white too."

Susan slipped into the school-room after

Margaret. "Miss Margaret," she said, "I do not know what I shall do with Miss Ada; she says she will not wear a white frock, and I know your mamma will be so angry if you do not go."

"Well, I cannot help it," said Margaret; "it is Ada's own fault. I did not throw the bottle down."

"No; I know you did not, Miss; but Miss Margaret, dear, do you think you would mind wearing a white frock too, just this once? It would be right enough, then, with Miss Ada."

Margaret paused a moment; the good and the bad were contending within her; alas! the bad prevailed: she replied, "No, indeed, Susan; I do not see why I should wear white just to please Ada; if she were not so unkind to me I would not mind, but if I go at all to-night I shall wear this frock, and perhaps Ada will see that people think something of me too, as well as of her."

"Well, I am sure I cannot blame you, Miss Margaret; Miss Ada is very pert, and you do look uncommonly nice in that frock."

After much coaxing on Susan's part, Ada was at length prevailed upon to suffer herself to be dressed in the white frock, and once at the party, soon forgot her troubles amidst the pleasures of the evening. She was a beautiful dancer, and was, moreover, passionately fond of the amusement. Margaret was not nearly so fond of it, and besides, having learned but a short time, danced very indifferently: no other amusement was provided for the young people, and after having danced a short time, she went and sat down on a window seat, being almost concealed by the curtains which fell over it. After a time two ladies took possession of a sofa just in front of her; she sat watching the dancers, and presently saw Ada, full of life and spirits, at no great distance.

"What a lovely little creature that Ada Craven is," said one of the ladies to the other; "do you see her in white, with a pink sash?"

"Yes," replied the other; "I think she is one of the sweetest children I ever saw; quite a little fairy; and she is so prettily

dressed, too, to-night. Her mamma sometimes loads her a great deal too much with finery. What a different girl the other is—Margaret, I think, they call her; is she here to-night?"

"Yes; I saw her somewhere just now," was the reply, "in a rose-coloured silk dress trimmed with lace; such a ridiculous dress for a girl of her age, and not at all suited to her complexion either; she would have looked three times as well if she had been dressed like Ada."

"Does she dance well?" inquired the other lady.

"Oh, no; very badly indeed; but it is not to be wondered at, for until the last six months, you know, she has been with an aunt in the country. I dare say she will improve after a time, but she will never be anything to compare with Ada in point of appearance."

This was enough for Margaret; she crept away from her seat; but there was no more pleasure for her that evening. She wished she could have gone home that very moment

to have taken off the hateful pink silk frock, and every time Ada came near her she could hardly bear to look at her, for the lady's words still kept ringing in her ears, "She will never be anything to compare with Ada."

"Oh!" said she to herself, as with a bitter feeling in her heart, she lay down on her bed that night, "oh that I could go again and live with aunt Ellen! She loved me; she does not love people because they are beautiful. Oh, if I had been beautiful like Ada!" Ah! Margaret, Margaret! but where is that beauty of the heart which that dear friend so earnestly bade you cultivate? have you forgotten her words? have you not left it, like a neglected plant, to wither and die of itself? Why is it that you now so seldom pray that your heart may be watered with heavenly dew from the Holy Spirit? why is it that you now so seldom seek, in the pleasant pastures of God's holy word, for food whereby it might be nourished and strengthened? Ah, Margaret! desire not beauty, for it is vain, but seek rather the

ornament of a "meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price."* Confess to God the sinfulness of your heart; look with faith to Jesus Christ his Son; and ask for pardon through his blood, which cleanses from all sin: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."†

* 1 Peter iii. 4. † 1 John i. 7, 9.

CHAPTER VII.

It was about two months after the party that Mrs. Craven, one morning, called Margaret into her dressing room, and said, "I have had some news this morning which you will like to hear, Margaret; guess what it is."

Margaret looked up, wondering much what it might be. Mrs. Craven went on: "I have had a letter from your aunt Ellen, and she is coming to see us."

Margaret burst into tears.

"Why, Margaret," said her mother, "what a strange girl you are; I thought you would be so pleased."

"So I am," sobbed Margaret; "but oh! mamma," she said, "I'm so afraid aunt Ellen will never love me any more."

"Never love you any more, child; why

what do you mean?" said her mother, regarding her with a look of astonishment.

"Not if you tell her how—how wicked I have been since I have been here," said Margaret, "and how Ada and I quarrel sometimes."

"Then, why *have* you been so naughty?" said her mother; "yes, you certainly do behave badly, very badly sometimes, Margaret."

"Oh! I don't know," said Margaret, still sobbing, "sometimes I can't help it; but you won't tell aunt Ellen, will you mamma?'

"Not if you promise to behave better for the future," said Mrs. Craven.

"I will, indeed I will," said Margaret, throwing her arms round her mother's neck and kissing her; "oh! thank you, mamma. When will aunt Ellen come?"

"In a few weeks," replied Mrs. Craven. "I believe you think a great deal more of your aunt Ellen than you do of me, Margaret. There, go away now, and do not make any disturbances with Ada before she comes."

"She is a strange child," said the mother,

as Margaret closed the door after her, "and certainly has more feeling than I supposed, after all."

Margaret now made an abundance of good resolutions, and determined so to behave during her aunt's visit that she should be unable to discover any alteration in her; but, alas! these resolutions were made in her own strength, consequently they were broken almost as soon as formed, and every night conscience told her of some fresh transgression, or some new violation of the rules she had laid down for herself.

At length Mrs. Shirley arrived, and for the first two or three days nothing occurred to mar the happiness which their meeting occasioned to both; but as aunt Ellen became by degrees to be more and more regarded as one of the family, little circumstances occurred now and then which induced her to fear that things were not with Margaret quite as she had hoped to find them. Ada lost the desire of showing herself off to the best advantage as to a stranger, and Margaret, unaccustomed to appear before her aunt

as anything but what she really was, grew careless in keeping the constant watch over her words and actions which she had at first done, and consequently often committed herself in Mrs. Shirley's presence in ways which she was afterwards sorry for.

Mrs. Shirley noticed all in silence. She loved Margaret far too fondly to wish to judge her harshly, or to blame her undeservedly, while this very love made her most anxious, if she were indeed wrong, to endeavour, as far as lay in her power, to guide her once more in the path which she so earnestly desired she might tread.

Mrs. Shirley had been in the house about a week, when one morning, Miss Gregory having, on account of her great attention, dismissed Margaret a quarter of an hour before Ada, she entered the library where her aunt usually spent her mornings, and with a pleased countenance said that she was come to stay with her until luncheon time. Mrs. Shirley, who was always glad to have her by her side, was not less pleased; she laid aside her book, and taking up her work,

said, "Now then, Margaret, dear, we can have a nice chat together; what is that you are doing?"

"It is a bead purse, aunty, which Miss Gregory has taught me how to make; do you like it? I am so fond of bead work."

"It is very pretty," said her aunt; "is the purse for your mamma?"

"Oh no, not for mamma," replied Margaret, "she has several purses. I cannot tell you whom it is for yet, aunt Ellen," she added, looking up with a smile.

They had not chatted thus many minutes, before Susan entered the room and said, "Miss Margaret, your mamma has sent me to tell you that you have forgotten to put any fresh flowers in the drawing-room, this morning; and she expects some ladies to call rather early to-day."

"Very well, Susan," replied Margaret, in no very gracious tone.

"Shall I ask Robins to bring you in some flowers, Miss?" said Susan.

"No; I like to get them myself best," replied Margaret, in the same tone. She was

evidently put out by being sent to see about flowers just then. Susan left the room.

"So it is still your task to arrange the flowers, as it used to be at the Thatched Cottage, Margaret," said her aunt.

"Yes," replied Margaret, still going on with her bead-work, "Ada never does them."

"You were always so fond of the employment yourself, Margaret," said Mrs. Shirley, "that I should think you would hardly wish to give it up to any one; surely you have not lost your taste for flowers in the midst of this beautiful garden."

"Oh, no," said Margaret, "I like them as much as ever, but still I think Ada might offer to help me, there are so many vases and baskets to fill sometimes;" and again she went on with her work. In about five minutes she looked up and caught the glance of reproof from her aunt's eye, which had once held such sway over her. She immediately began to put up her things, but it was full a quarter of an hour from the time she received her mother's message before she

left the room. In an hour she returned; her eyes were red and swollen with weeping.

"What is the matter, my love?" said her aunt, "you have been crying."

"Mamma has been so angry with me, aunt Ellen," replied she, her tears again falling.

"Perhaps you deserved it, Margaret," said Mrs. Shirley, very quietly.

"I could not help the flowers not being ready," said Margaret; "I only staid in the hall a minute to play with the kitten, and then somebody came, and went into the drawing-room, and I could not get the vases, and now mamma has been angry with me about it."

"But you remained in this room more than ten minutes after your mamma sent for you, Margaret," said her aunt.

Margaret did not reply. Everything seemed to go wrong with her for the remainder of the day. Mrs. Shirley had brought her a great many pieces for some silk patchwork which she had begun, but noticing that Ada was also busy making pincushions and needle-books, she gave the packet

between them, saying, that they must divide it themselves. They took it up into the school-room, and that evening stood by the table looking over its contents which were spread out before them. Miss Gregory was not there.

"I shall have that piece," cried Ada, seizing a piece of bright blue brocade; it will just do to make a needle-book for my new work-box."

"No, you cannot have that, Ada," said Margaret, "I want it for my patchwork."

"But I will have it," retorted Ada, "it is as much my right as yours."

"No, it is not," said Margaret; "aunt Ellen did not mean you to have had any of the pieces, at first, and you ought to be contented with what I choose to give you."

"No, I ought not," returned Ada, "for aunt Ellen said we were to divide them fairly between us, and if you do not let me have that piece, I will go and tell her this very minute."

"I don't care," said Margaret, "you may

tell her if you like;" and she snatched the disputed piece from Ada's hand; and as she did so she turned towards the door, and there, to her astonishment, in the open doorway stood Mrs. Shirley. If ever Margaret felt utterly ashamed of herself she did at that moment; she would not have cared half so much if it had been her mother; she would have looked very angry, have scolded her for not letting Ada have the silk, and there would have been an end of it, but her aunt Ellen did not look angry — she never did look angry; neither did she speak one word of blame, she only took hold of her hand and led her out into the garden.

Margaret walked tremblingly along, expecting every moment that her aunt would say something; but, on the contrary, she began to talk about the flowers, and so Margaret comforted herself with the idea that she had either not witnessed the quarrel, or else that she considered that Ada was wrong and she right.

Mrs. Shirley occasionally begged permission of Miss Gregory to sit in the school-room

for an hour or two in the morning, saying that it gave her great pleasure to watch her little nieces at their studies. It was Margaret's week to arrange the table. Ada was looking over her lessons, which she never learned till the last moment. Mrs. Shirley came in with her knitting in her hand and took her seat at the window; Miss Gregory not being very well that morning, had not yet joined them.

"Ada," said Margaret, taking up Ada's slate as she placed the books on the table, "there is your sum not done, nor your exercise either."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Ada, "what shall I do? I do not quite know my lessons, and that foolish exercise, I shall never get it done, and Miss Gregory said I should not go down to dessert if there were a single mistake in it, and she will be here in a minute." Fortunately for Ada, however, Miss Gregory did not come quite so soon; she had time to finish her sum, but the exercise, which was one in geography, seemed to puzzle her beyond everything. Margaret saw her turn

over first one leaf of her atlas and then another in her bewilderment, but she had no objection that her aunt Ellen should see how superior she was to Ada in some respects, and knowing that if left to herself the exercise would be full of mistakes, she took no notice of her troubled countenance, but pretended to be very deeply engaged in learning a French verb, which she knew quite well the night before.

"You seem to be in great perplexity, Ada," said Mrs. Shirley, after a while, "it is some time since I have written an exercise, but, perhaps, if you bring your books and slate to me I may be able to help you a little."

"Oh, thank you, aunt Ellen," said Ada; "I cannot tell which map to look in for these rivers." But aunt Ellen happened to be able to tell; and so in a very short time the exercise was completed.

Notwithstanding that her lessons were perfectly learned, and all her tasks performed entirely to Miss Gregory's satisfaction, Margaret did not feel comfortable, or at all

satisfied with herself that morning; something in her aunt's manner towards her told her that she had noticed more than Margaret wished her to see. For some days, indeed, ever since the affair of filling the flower vases, she had had a sort of dread which she had never felt before of being left alone with her; but as time passed on, and, though several other incidents of the same kind occurred, no notice was taken of them, she began to feel less uneasy, and to think, as she wished to persuade herself was the case, that her aunt saw plainly that these little disagreements arose entirely from Ada's selfishness and bad temper. She did not know that all this time Mrs. Shirley was carefully studying the position in which she saw her placed, in order that she might, without being severe or unjust, endeavour the more effectually to use the influence which she felt she still possessed over her, in correcting those faults and blemishes in her character which every day made more apparent to her view, and more painful to her to witness.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Shirley's visit was fast drawing to a close, but as yet she had said nothing which could lead Margaret to suppose that she had discovered the change which had crept over her. But nothing is more difficult than dissimulation to those who have always been accustomed to act only as they feel. It was so with Margaret, and frequently, when she was not at all aware that she did so, words, looks, and actions escaped her, of which, had she thought for a moment, she would have been ashamed, but which did not pass unnoticed by the eye of affection which was now again daily watching over her. One day Mrs. Craven was going out to make some calls, and intended to take Margaret and Ada with her, but as her aunt Ellen was not very well,

Margaret petitioned to be allowed instead to remain at home with her. They chatted pleasantly awhile about old times, for Margaret was never tired of making inquiries, and listening to anecdotes of every person and thing, animate or inanimate, which she had left behind in her "other home," as she always called the Thatched Cottage.

"And my myrtle by the drawing-room window, is that growing, aunt Ellen?" said she, after she had inquired about the welfare of almost every flower in the garden; "oh dear! I wonder if I shall ever see it again."

"I hope so, my darling," replied Mrs. Shirley, "if it please God to spare you and me both for another year, I hope you will come and stay with me."

"Oh, aunt Ellen, how glad I shall be! Do you think mamma will let me stay for a long time?"

"I hope so," replied her aunt; "are you sure that you shall be glad to come, Margaret?"

"Oh, aunty! how can you ask me," said Margaret, "when I love you so?"

"Because, dear Margaret, I have thought sometimes, since I have been here, that you do *not* love me now so well as you once did; if you did, I think you would not so often do things which you know must grieve me," said Mrs. Shirley.

A sort of chill came over Margaret; her eyes fell as she answered in a low voice, "I have not meant to grieve you, aunt Ellen."

"But I have been grieved, much grieved, Margaret, nevertheless, at many things which I have seen," replied her aunt.

"I know what you mean, aunt Ellen; you mean about the flowers that day, and the pieces of silk, and Ada's exercise."

"Yes, I certainly noticed these things among others, but Margaret, dear, it is not only the actions themselves which have grieved me, it is the change which I fear must have come over your heart to produce them. I am afraid, my love, that you have forgotten or much neglected your promise to me that you would strive earnestly to be one of God's children, and to serve and please him."

Margaret's heart was touched; she burst into tears, and throwing her arms round Mrs. Shirley's neck, exclaimed, "Oh! aunt Ellen, you don't know how wicked I have been, for this long time; if you did, I don't think you would ever love me again."

"I should love you, my child, the same as ever," said Mrs. Shirley tenderly, and drawing Margaret towards her as she spoke; "come, now, and tell me how all this has come about, and how it is that you are not quite the same Margaret that you once were."

"Oh, aunt Ellen, I do not know how to begin," said Margaret, wiping away her tears; "everything is so different here to what it was when I was with you; it does not seem as if I could be good."

"You mean, my love, that you have more temptations now to do wrong than you had when you were with me; but remember, Margaret, there is no sin in being tempted; the sin is when we give way to the temptation."

"Yes, I know that," said Margaret, "but

Ada is so domineering, and vexes and teases me so sometimes; and then—"

"And then you feel that you like to vex and tease her in return."

"Yes," replied Margaret half reluctantly, "I did not at first; I used to help her and give way to her very often, and then we did not disagree nearly so much; but nobody took any notice or seemed to think it was good of me, and so I grew tired at last of caring to keep friends with her."

"Then you did good, not so much for the sake of pleasing God as from the desire to get praises for it, was that it, Margaret?"

Margaret was silent for a moment, then she said, "I suppose it was, aunt Ellen; but I did not think about it; yet I did try to be good very often; but somehow I always got bad again."

"Perhaps, Margaret, you tried to be good in your own strength; perhaps you did not feel that you needed help, and forgot to ask God for the aid of his Holy Spirit to strengthen you in what was right; and perhaps sometimes you resisted his pleadings,

and went on doing what was wrong in spite of the gentle voice within you, telling you that it was so."

Margaret's heart once opened, she told her aunt, with all the freedom of by-gone days, and without the least attempt either at concealment or self-justification, of the many difficulties she had had to contend with, and of her many backslidings; how she had at first begun by giving way to small temptations to do wrong, then to greater ones, until at length she had grown quite careless and negligent, as to whether what she did was right or not.

"And have you gone on reading your Bible, all this time, Margaret," said Mrs. Shirley, "looking and trusting to Christ for pardon, and praying for God's help and guidance?"

"No, aunt Ellen," replied Margaret, sorrowfully; "I did read and pray at first, but Ada teased me so, and laughed at me, and told papa, and he laughed at me too, and called me queer names, and mamma said that the Bible was too difficult for me

to understand; and then I began to read a little less and a little less, till at last I did not read it at all sometimes, excepting a little bit on Sundays just to say that I had read it, when Ada was out of the way; and then I said my prayers much quicker, and did not try to think about them, and what I should ask God for, as I used to do."

Mrs. Shirley saw the difficult position in which poor Margaret was placed; she hesitated a moment, and prayed silently that she might answer wisely; then she said, "I see how it is, Margaret dear; you have indeed many more temptations to do wrong than you once had, but you must try to overcome them. You must ask God to help you not to mind being laughed at, and to enable you to bear with humility and meekness whatever may be said to you. Your papa and mamma, dear Margaret, think differently from me on these subjects, but you must not on that account love and honour them the less; all that you can do at present is to pray that God will bless them, and lead them to love him, and by the meekness,

gentleness, and humility of your own conduct, to show them the beauty of the religion of that Saviour whose child you would seek to be."

"I do love papa and mamma," said Margaret; "I know that I ought to love them better than anybody, for papa, though he does laugh at me, is very kind, and buys me a great many things, and so does mamma; but I know they love Ada better than they do me, and I cannot help loving you better than I do them, aunt Ellen, I cannot indeed; is it wicked of me? I would not tell anybody but you."

"I do not think that it is wicked, my love," replied Mrs. Shirley; "you have not yet lived with your papa and mamma so long as you did with me; when you have you may love them quite as dearly."

"Still," said Margaret, "I do wish I might come back and live with you again at the Thatched Cottage; I was much happier then, though we had not a carriage and a pony, and so many fine things; I could come often and see papa and mamma, and Ada, you know."

"You must not wish that, dear Margaret; for however much I might like to have you, I know that it is neither right nor natural that you should be separated from your parents and sister, even if they would permit it, which I am quite sure they would not. Besides, Margaret, you must remember that God places us all in those stations which it is best for us to occupy; if it were not for some right and good purpose, you would not be here with difficulties to overcome, and temptations to withstand, any more than I should be living alone in the Thatched Cottage, often regretting that you are not still there, to help me make clothes for the poor people, in the long winter evenings, or to go on Sunday afternoons to read the Bible to poor old Goody."

Margaret smiled at this allusion to her old friend, and said, "Aunty, I wish I had something to send Goody when you go back."

"Well, cannot you buy her something? I recollect that before you came, you were afraid that you should have too much pocket money; how have you spent it?"

"Well, at first," said Margaret, "I began to save it, and thought I would give some to an old woman who weeds in the garden, to buy her a new gown; but Ada laughed at me, and mamma said that she would give her a new gown if she wanted one, and then I thought I would still save it up for the Missionary Society without saying a word to anybody, but somehow I did not do it, and I have spent it every week ever since; *that* was not right either, was it, aunt Ellen?"

"You had power to do as you pleased with your own, my love," replied her aunt; "still I think that if you had applied a part of your money, at least, to good or useful purposes, instead of spending the whole on yourself, you would have done right and have felt more satisfaction; what have you bought with it?"

"Only little things that I don't care anything about; and now I have not even one shilling to send poor old Goody," she added mournfully; "but I won't do it again, aunt Ellen; I will save it until I come to see you, if I cannot find any thing else to do

with it, and then you will help me to spend it, won't you?"

"I daresay I shall feel no objection," replied Mrs. Shirley, smiling, "but perhaps you may be able to find something else to do with it before then."

CHAPTER IX.

It is by no means so easy, when we have carelessly wandered into a wrong path, to retrace our steps, as it would have been, even though the task had proved one of labour and difficulty, to have kept in the narrow road from the first. Margaret found that it was even so with her; had she kept on steadily as she first began, she would have met with far fewer difficulties than now beset her steps when she again set forward. Ada was less inclined to love her, and to think favourably of her than, notwithstanding her many spoiled and selfish ways, she had once been. Miss Gregory, though she liked Margaret as an attentive and clever pupil, took little or no interest in the moral or religious training of those committed to her care, and was, therefore, not at all likely

either to understand or to assist her in the struggles with herself, in which she was again so often engaged. Her father saw but little, and knew less of her, while her mother, in whose heart Ada undoubtedly held the first place, quite lost sight, in the remembrance of their former disagreements, and the unkindnesses of which her darling had so often complained, of the daily efforts which Margaret was now making to please and obey her, not only as regarded Ada, but in many other little ways, which, though hardly worth speaking of, would yet have shown, to a careful observer, the goodness and purity of motive which gave rise to them.

Thus weeks and months rolled on, bringing, as far as outward appearances went, but little change in Margaret's daily life, whatever change there was in herself. Day by day she was learning, though by slow degrees, to see how sinful and weak she was, and therefore to trust less to her own unaided strength, to seek more and more for Divine teaching, and to lean more and more upon the Divine arm for help and guidance.

At first she found it very difficult to keep a constant watch over herself, to do those things which she ought to do, and to keep from doing those things which she ought not to do; often, sometimes consciously, sometimes almost without knowing it, did she find herself giving way to old tempers and feelings. Sometimes Ada would say unkind and cutting things, and Margaret would feel as if nothing would be so pleasant as to retort, and sometimes when she had tried her utmost to quell her rising passion, and to give a soft answer or a kind action in return, Ada would attribute it to some wrong or bad motive, or receive ungraciously all her attempts at conciliation, even when she knew that she, and not Margaret, was in the wrong. And yet, in spite of this, there were times when Ada could not help feeling that she was unjust towards Margaret, and could not help liking her far better than she had once done. Ada's disposition was not naturally unkind, but unhappily it had been quite spoiled and rendered selfish by the unbounded indulgence in which she had been

brought up. Occasionally, when she was in a better mood, she would thank Margaret for any little assistance bestowed on her in her studies, or otherwise, and these few words sounded so pleasantly that Margaret at such times began to feel towards Ada quite differently, and to make allowances for her which at one time she would never have thought of.

But Margaret had other sore trials; she still had to see Ada caressed, admired, and flattered, by all, while *she* was often passed by unnoticed. She still had to hear those things which she had always been taught to hold most dear and sacred, and which she knew were right and good, made light of, or turned into jest and ridicule, while she must sit by and hear all but say nothing. Often in the silent watches of the night she would lie and think of these things, then of her aunt Ellen, and of how different her life had been passed with her, until her pillow was wet with tears, and then she would lift up her heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, to her Father in heaven, beseeching him to be

LETTER OF INVITATION.

her friend; and at length comforted by the thought that he *was* her friend, would fall into sweet and refreshing slumber.

One day there came an invitation from a lady, an old and valued friend of their father's, for either Margaret or Ada to go and spend a few days at her house. She did not name which it was to be in her note, saying that, as it was only convenient to her to have one at a time, they must settle between them which should come first. Ada, who invariably thought of herself before any one else, immediately begged that she might go, but her father, who was always particular that in such cases Margaret should enjoy her right of precedence as the eldest, and who happened at that moment to be in the room, at once decided against Ada.

"No, Ada," said he, "you must not expect Margaret always to give up to you; she is the eldest, and will certainly go to Mrs. Ward's first—so say nothing more about it."

Mr. Craven did not often speak so decidedly to Ada; when he did she knew that further dispute was useless. With a pout on

her lip, and a cloud on her brow, she went off up stairs. In a short time Margaret went up too. As she passed along the passage she heard Ada's voice from their bed-room, the door of which stood open. Ada was standing with her back to it while Susan was smoothing out her hair. "I think Margaret *might* have offered to let me go first," said she in a voice which told that she was half crying, "it couldn't signify to her—and I wanted to go so very much."

Margaret did not pause to hear Susan's reply, but passed on to the school-room. No one was there, and she sat down to think. In about five minutes she again went down to the library where she had left her father and mother. "Papa," said she, going up to him, "do you think Mrs. Ward would mind whether Ada or I went this time?"

"What do you mean, Meggie?" said he, taking her hand.

"I mean, papa, do you think she would mind if Ada went this time and I the next, instead of my going first and Ada afterwards?"

"No, I think she would not, if you would

rather it be so; but what does mamma say?" said he, looking across at Mrs. Craven.

"Don't you wish to go, Margaret?" said her mamma; "I think it is very ungrateful of you."

"I didn't mean to be ungrateful, mamma," replied Margaret, a flush coming over her face, "but I know Ada wants to go very much this time if you will let her."

"Well, you are certainly a very odd girl, Margaret," said her mamma; "but if your papa does not object to it you may settle it between you."

"Thank you, mamma," said Margaret, and with a kiss from Mr. Craven she flew off upstairs.

"Margaret is certainly one of the strangest children I ever knew," remarked her mother as she left the room; "there is no understanding her; now what motive in the world she can have for wishing Ada to go instead of herself I cannot imagine."

"I believe it is nothing but pure good nature which actuates her," replied Mr. Craven.

"Nonsense!" said his wife; "children are not quite so fond of making sacrifices for one another, depend upon it; however, she may do as she likes, for I know there would be no peace in the house with Ada if Margaret went first."

But it was a sacrifice nevertheless, little as Mrs. Craven could understand it; for Mrs. Ward was one of the few people visiting at her father's house whom Margaret really liked. She had been an early friend of her aunt Ellen's, and from this cause, as well as from a liking which she had taken to Margaret, always took particular notice of her, showing her many little kindnesses, for which Margaret could not help feeling grateful and loving her. When she entered the school-room, Ada was there, looking the very picture of discontent. "Ada," said she, going up to her, "you are to go to Mrs. Ward's."

Ada's eyes sparkled. "Who said so?" she replied; "we are not both to go, are we?"

"No," said Margaret, "but you are to go

first, instead of me; I have been asking papa and mamma, and they say you may."

"But don't you want to go, Margaret?" said Ada, waking a little from her selfishness.

"Yes; but I do not mind whether I go now or afterwards," replied Margaret.

"Are you sure you do not mind?" said Ada.

"Yes, quite sure," said Margaret, and the bright smile which came over her face showed that she spoke the truth. Ada's proud little heart felt at first as if she could hardly condescend to thank her, but a better feeling came over her, and going to her sister she put her face as though she would kiss her, and said in a humble tone, "I am very much obliged to you, Margaret; it is very kind of you to let me go first." The tears were in Margaret's eyes; she put her arms round her, and thought the kisses which Ada gave her the most welcome she had ever received in her life. Truly, at that moment, Margaret felt that it is indeed, "more blessed to give than to receive."

The next day being a holiday, she spent

nearly all the morning in helping Susan to look out and pack up Ada's things.

"Dear Miss Margaret," said Susan, "I am sure I don't know when I should have got these things done if you had not have helped me so; Miss Ada's clothes do want so much looking over and mending, but there, you are so good always."

"No, I am not good, Susan," replied Margaret, "you must not say that."

"Well then, Miss, if you are not good, I should like to know who is," said Susan; "I should just like to know whether Miss Ada would have given up to you about going out, as you have to her."

"Perhaps she would not have thought of it, Susan," replied Margaret, exchanging a sash, from Ada's box, for one of her own, which was much better.

"Perhaps she would not have done it if she had," said Susan, bluntly; "no, no, Miss Margaret, after all you can say, Miss Ada isn't over fond of giving up to anybody; she isn't over kind to you either, Miss, sometimes."

"She is kinder than she used to be, Susan," said Margaret; "besides, you must remember that Ada had always been like the eldest, so it was no wonder she did not like it when I first came."

"Well, and I suppose you always *had* been the eldest, Miss Margaret," persisted Susan, with whom Margaret was a great favourite; "but there, it's no use talking, I know you always like to make excuses for everybody if you can."

While Ada was away Margaret used her utmost endeavours to do everything which she thought would please her father and mother, and succeeded so well that her mamma, one day, showed her a new cotton gown, which she said she had bought for Nancy White, and which she intended Margaret, as a reward for her good behaviour, to have the pleasure of giving to the old woman the next time she came to weed in the garden. Margaret would much rather that she had bought it with her own pocket money, but still it *was* a pleasure to her to give it, after all. Her father, too, said

she had been so merry, and had laughed so often, that he had hardly missed Ada at all.

Ada returned wonderfully delighted with her visit, but as Margaret listened to her glowing accounts of the pleasures she had enjoyed, instead of being envious, or regretting what she had missed, she felt that in her endeavours to make others happy, she had herself grown happy too, and that within her heart had risen sweet, though hidden, springs of enjoyment, which no external circumstances could destroy, and with which the fleeting pleasures of which Ada too often thought so much would bear no comparison.

CHAPTER X.

"WELL, my little sober-face, and what was the sermon about this morning?" said Mr. Craven to Margaret, as she sat by his side one Sunday evening after dinner.

"About a great many things, papa," was Margaret's reply.

"Well, but what was the text? I suppose text and sermon are always pretty much alike, are they not?"

Margaret looked in his face to see if he really meant her to tell him the text, and as he appeared serious she replied, "It was in Matthew, papa, the seventeenth chapter and the fourth verse, 'It is good for us to be here.'"

"Good for us to be here; that is rather an odd text, I think," said he, "and I doubt whether you are always of that opinion,

Margaret; it strikes me that now and then you would think it much better to be with that aunt Ellen of yours than here, eh?"

"I should like to be with her very much sometimes, papa; but I like to be here with you too. Besides, aunt Ellen says that it is best for me, and that I ought not to wish to be with her."

"What! not to make frocks and jackets for ragged children, and then teach them to read and sing psalms? I am quite surprised at aunt Ellen—quite ashamed of her."

In this bantering way he went on for some time, Mrs. Craven and Miss Gregory occasionally joining in a laugh at Margaret's expense. At length something was said which she thought touched her aunt Ellen too closely; she could not bear it any longer, but, bursting into tears, ran out of the room.

"We have been a little too hard upon her," said Mr. Craven, after a while, "and it strikes me that Margaret is not one to be laughed out of anything; I must go and find her, and make my peace with her."

She was sitting alone in the school-room,

still weeping. He really loved her tenderly, and was sorry for having thus wounded her feelings. He sat down, and took her hand, saying, "Come, come, Meggie dear, wipe away these tears; I did not mean to make you cry; your aunt Ellen is a dear good woman, and nobody shall ever say a word against her. You are quite right to love her as you do, only I did not like to see you put on a serious face; I like you to laugh and be merry."

"It is not aunt Ellen that makes me have a serious face, papa."

"No, no; but you see she sets you to Bible reading, and that sort of thing, which is not fit for a little girl like you, and that makes you look serious; you have been reading the Bible this afternoon, I know, but I do not believe you have understood what you read."

"Not all of it, papa," said Margaret.

"No, of course not; religion is all very right, you know, for people when they get old enough, but it is not fit for such young

things as you and Ada to trouble yourselves about."

"But, papa, everybody does not live to be old," said Margaret.

"No, but a great many do; at all events, I think you and Ada will; see what rosy cheeks she has, and yours are much fatter and of a better colour than they were."

Margaret did not answer, but as her father kissed her, and took her hand to lead her down stairs again, a little hymn, which her aunt had once taught her, came into her mind.

"Within the churchyard, side by side,
Are many long, low graves,
And some have stones set over them—
On some the green grass waves.

"Full many a little Christian child,
Woman and man lie there,
And we pass by them every time,
When we go in to prayer.

"They cannot hear our footsteps come,
They do not see us pass,
They cannot feel the bright warm sun
That shines upon the grass.

"They do not hear when the great bell
Is ringing over head;
They cannot rise and come to church
With us—for they are dead."

It was not many weeks after this circumstance, that Margaret and Ada one evening had a little party at home, consisting of the young people of about their own age, whom they knew in the neighbourhood. Ada, as usual, danced until she made herself excessively hot, and not knowing how to get cool again, went and stood by an open window in the conservatory, which adjoined the drawing-room. Margaret, who was sensible enough to know that this was very unwise, went to her and said—

"Do not stand here, Ada, you will take cold, you are so very hot."

"No I shall not," said Ada, "and this wind is so delightful; do let me alone, Margaret."

"Then have a shawl to put on," said Margaret; "I know mamma would not let you stay if she were here."

"But mamma is *not* here," said the self-willed Ada; "there, I won't stay more

than another minute, Margaret, if you will only go away."

Margaret went away, but Ada staid until she was as she said nice and cool, and then went back and danced again. In a few days she had a violent cold and cough; her mother wondered how she could have taken it. She was well nursed, and in two or three weeks appeared quite well, excepting that the cough never entirely left her; the doctor, however, said that it would go away in the spring, especially if they were to take her to Devonshire or the Isle of Wight. Mr. Craven, who from being much in India enjoyed a warmer climate himself, determined on spending the summer in one of these places, and finally fixed upon Devonshire. Ada's cough soon left her, but Margaret was disappointed of her promised visit to the Thatched Cottage. This she bore as well as she could, especially after being informed by her aunt, in one of her letters, that she should very probably join them for a short time in Devonshire before they returned home. She did so,

and on the whole Margaret had no reason to be dissatisfied with the enjoyment which the summer had afforded her.

They returned home towards the end of September, Ada appearing to be in perfect health and looking more blooming and beautiful than ever. About the middle of October, cold winds set in, and her cough, without any apparent cause, returned. At first she coughed only two or three times a day, then more frequently, then it began to trouble her occasionally in the night, until at length her mother, when the frost came, ordered a fire in her bed room; but even then it was no better, and sometimes Margaret would get up four or five times to give her things to ease it. Her mother began to feel a little anxious about her, for sometimes, when she came down of a morning, she looked thin and pale; but she said she was quite well, and towards evening her colour would return, and she would seem as bright and lively as ever, and then Mrs. Craven would look at her sparkling eyes and feel angry with herself for having

fancied that anything could be the matter with her. But about Christmas time the weather became intensely cold, and Ada, in addition to her cough, began to grow languid, and to complain of an occasional pain in her chest and side. A doctor was called in: he did not say what was the matter with her, but Ada thought there was no end to the questions he asked her, and the orders he gave that she should never go out in the cold air, not even in the carriage.

Margaret was always a light sleeper, and before long Ada's cough woke her more frequently than ever; still Mrs. Craven, who could not bear the idea of her darling being really ill, comforted herself with the idea that it was only a cough, and that when warmer weather came it would go away. Before the weather grew warmer, however, Ada grew much worse, and although her appetite was good, and the pain in her chest less frequent, there was no mistaking her short breathing, and thin wasted form, for any other symptoms than those of real

illness. Sometimes she was confined for a whole day to the sofa, and her mother's looks would tell how anxious she felt; but then, if any little excitement came, she would brighten up and seem almost well again, and then Mrs. Craven would smile at her fears, and once more declare that after all it was "only a cough."

One morning (Ada had been very ill that night) Margaret happened to go down stairs just as the doctor was going out; he shook hands with her, and told her that she must take all the care she could of her sister.

"Will Ada get well soon, sir?" she asked.

"People can never get well in such cold weather as this, Miss Margaret," said he, shivering as a cold gust blew in at the open door; "wait till the violets and nightingales come, and I will tell you another story then. Good bye," he added, nodding and smiling, "you will get cold yourself if you stand here, and then I shall have two patients instead of one;" and he closed the door behind him. Margaret passed on into the breakfast room; her mother was sitting

by the fire weeping. She stood still for a moment, not knowing whether to advance or not.

"Go away, Margaret," said Mrs. Craven, without looking up.

"Mamma," said Margaret, "is there anything the matter, anything about Ada; will she be better soon?"

"Yes, I hope so," replied her mother, "go upstairs, Margaret."

Margaret would have given worlds to have thrown herself upon her mother's neck and have wept with her, but she obeyed her and left the room, and from that moment the thought took possession of her mind that Ada would die. When she went alone into the drawing-room in the evening—for Ada was too poorly to leave her bed at all that day—she saw that her mamma had again been weeping, and that her papa looked sad and serious. He began to talk about going into Devonshire again, and said he wondered how soon the doctor would consider Ada fit to bear the journey. For the next few days, however, the little invalid

was so much better, that he laughed and said he was sure, after all, the doctor had raised a false alarm; but the improvement was only transient, and at length poor Ada was confined entirely to her own room, the medical attendant forbidding, until the weather became warmer, even the slight change of atmosphere which she would experience in going down stairs.

No word was ever breathed before her as to the possibility of her not getting well again; on the contrary, her recovery was spoken of by every one as certain. Her father would come in and lay plans about what they would do, as soon as she was well enough to go into Devonshire; and her mother, thinking to amuse her, would encourage her to talk about new frocks, and ribbons, and bonnets, and sometimes her eye would sparkle, and her cheek grow bright, as of old; but at others she would listen languidly, and appear restless, uninterested, and uneasy. Margaret often wondered whether her papa and mamma really thought that Ada would get better, or

whether she thought so herself, but she never said anything, indeed the idea of death seemed almost too awful for her even to think of to herself, much more to speak about to others.

On account of Ada's illness their Christmas holidays had been lengthened considerably, Mr. Craven not thinking it worth while for Miss Gregory to return as long as she was so ill, and Margaret therefore spent much of her time in her sister's room. She liked to be with Ada, although, poor child, she was often very pettish, impatient, and fractious, finding fault with things which were done only with the view of giving her ease and comfort. Even Susan, though most good natured, could not at times refrain from being a little put out by her constant murmurings. But Margaret was never put out; she would listen patiently to all her complaints, getting her everything she asked for, not only without murmuring at the trouble she gave her, but with such readiness and cheerfulness, that Ada, much accustomed as she was to indulgence, could

not help noticing it to herself. Margaret did not know this until one day, when Susan did something which did not please Ada, she heard her say, "You are not a bit like Margaret, Susan; she never grumbles at me, and never scolds me. I like her to cut my oranges for me a great deal better than you." The tears came into Margaret's eyes at this testimony which Ada was not at all aware that she heard; after that, it was a pleasure to her to comply even with her most unreasonable demands; she was always at hand whenever Ada wanted her, and seemed, by a sort of instinct, to know better than any one else, how to manage her, and how to amuse her, when she wanted amusement. She was the only one who did not keep constantly telling her that she would get well; but Margaret never talked much when others were present, and so this was not noticed.

CHAPTER XI.

It was Sunday evening, Mr. and Mrs. Craven were down stairs at dinner, Ada was lying on the sofa by the fire, with Margaret sitting at her feet.

"Margaret," said she, "what are all those little books about, in that corner of your top drawer?"

"They are books that aunt Ellen gave me," replied Margaret; "some of them are little story books."

"Are they pretty?" said Ada.

"Yes; this one is very pretty indeed," replied Margaret, getting up and taking one out of the drawer, "it is about a little girl who was ill like you, Ada."

"Is it? I wish you would read it to me. I feel as if I should like to go to sleep, and reading makes me do so sometimes."

Margaret willingly complied; Ada did not go to sleep, but when she had listened for a quarter of an hour exclaimed, "Did she die, Margaret?"

"Yes," replied Margaret, "at the end of the book."

"Then what did you begin to read it to me for," said Ada. "I do not want to hear any more. I cannot bear to hear about people dying."

"She was very happy, Ada dear," said Margaret gently.

"I do not care, I do not want to hear about it," said Ada, almost pettishly, and Margaret closed the book and put it away.

The next Sunday afternoon they were alone together. Ada was on the couch, and Margaret on the ottoman by her side.

"Read me something, Margaret," said Ada.

"What shall I read, dear?" said Margaret.

"One of those stories out of that new story book papa bought me the other day," replied Ada.

"But I do not think that is a Sunday book, dear Ada," said Margaret, very gently, "it would not be right to read it to-day, you know."

"*Papa* did not say it was not a Sunday book," replied Ada in her old pettish manner, "and you have no right to set yourself up against him."

"I did not mean to do that, Ada, but papa did not say it *was* a Sunday book," replied Margaret.

"Well, you are very disagreeable," said Ada, in the same tone in which she had before spoken; "I wish I could sit up a little better without coughing, I would read a story for myself."

There was silence for a little while. Ada closed her eyes, Margaret sat with her head on her hand looking at her, and apparently thinking about her; then she said (it was the first time she had ever made such a proposal, and she had to summon up all her courage to do it now), "Ada dear, I wish you would let me read something to you out of the Bible—about Elijah being

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fed by the ravens, and then by the poor widow woman," she added after a pause, "I am sure you would like it."

Ada moved her lips; Margaret could not tell whether she said "yes," or "no," but taking up her Bible she found the part which she had mentioned, and in a low, sweet manner, peculiar to herself, began to read. After a time Ada opened her eyes and watched her as she read on; when she had finished she said—

"That is very pretty; is all the Bible as pretty as that, Margaret?"

"No, not all of it," replied Margaret, hesitating, "but aunt Ellen used to say that we ought not to read the Bible only because it is pretty."

"What ought people to read it for then?" said Ada.

"To learn how to serve God, and how to be saved, and to get to heaven, when they die," answered Margaret.

"If people are good they are sure to go to heaven," said Ada.

"But you know, Ada, nobody is quite

good; the Bible says, 'there is none righteous, no not one,' and 'all have sinned;' so nobody can go to heaven because he is good."

"How, then," said Ada, "can any one go there?"

"The Bible says it is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners." Margaret paused, looking at Ada.

Ada returned her glance with a look which seemed to say that she did not at all understand what she meant, even now; but some one happening at the moment to come into the room, further conversation, for that day at least, was prevented.

CHAPTER XII.

THOSE about Margaret, who saw how unceasingly she watched and tended Ada, little supposed that her mind was occupied with any other thought than that of relieving the bodily sufferings of the poor little invalid, or that her gentle ministrations were guided by aught but sisterly affection towards her. They did not know (for indeed there was no one to whom she could speak about it) that within her heart had sprung up an intense desire that poor Ada might be led into the way of life and peace, through that Saviour whom she had herself learned to trust, to love, and to serve. None but God knew how often and earnestly Margaret's heart was lifted up in Ada's behalf in simple prayer, that God would teach her, by his Spirit, to believe in Jesus,

that thus she might be forgiven, and received at last into the bright and glorious kingdom which he has prepared for those that love him.

One day, not long after the conversation related in the last chapter, Mrs. Craven, being obliged to leave home for a few hours, went out, leaving Ada to the care of Susan, and telling Margaret to amuse her while she was gone. Susan went down stairs to prepare some little thing for her, leaving Margaret by the bedside. Ada's face was hidden under the clothes, and Margaret, thinking she was asleep, and that her breathing would be obstructed, gently removed them. She was not asleep, she was weeping, a thing by no means uncommon.

"Ada, dear," said Margaret affectionately, "what is the matter? Do not cry."

Ada lifted up her head. "Is Susan here?" she asked.

"No," said Margaret; "but I will call her in a moment."

"No, don't," said Ada; "I do not want her; I want to speak to you, Margaret.

Oh, Margaret," she continued, sobbing, "I am so unhappy, I do not think I shall ever get any better."

"God can make you better, Ada, dear," said Margaret, "if it pleases him."

"Yes," said poor Ada; "but I do not think he will; I think I am going to die. Oh! Margaret, what shall I do? I wish I had been good like you, I should not be afraid then."

"I am not good, Ada, indeed I am not," said Margaret earnestly. "You do not know how wicked I am very often, Ada."

"No, you are not," said Ada, "I am sure if you were to die you would go to heaven."

"If I were, it would be only because Jesus has died for me," replied Margaret; "and you will go too, Ada dear, if you believe in him, and love him."

"But I have never been good," persisted Ada; "I have often told stories, and been ill tempered, and unkind to you, and laughed at you for minding what aunt Ellen said, and done other bad things besides."

"But God will forgive you, Ada, if you

ask him, for Jesus Christ's sake," said Margaret. "You know the Bible says, as I told you, there is not anybody in the world quite good: if people had been quite good Jesus need not have come to die for them."

Ada raised herself upon her pillow as if she expected Margaret to go on, but finding she did not, she said—

"What does it mean about Jesus dying for us, Margaret. I know he was crucified, but I don't know why."

"Do you not know, dear Ada," replied Margaret, "that Adam and Eve did what God told them not to do, and so sinned against God? Since then, their children, and everybody in the world, have been sinful, and all have deserved to be punished for ever, because they are sinners. I can repeat a verse that says so: 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'* But God had compassion, and sent 'his Son Jesus Christ' to save

* Rom. v. 12.

them. The Bible says, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"*

"Do you mean, then," asked Ada, "that everybody would have been punished if Jesus had not died instead?"

"Yes," answered Margaret; "and so will all people now who do not believe on him and love him."

"But suppose Jesus does not love them," said Ada. "I do not think he loves me, Margaret," she added, looking into Margaret's face.

"Yes, he does, dear Ada," replied Margaret, "aunt Ellen has often told me that he loves everybody, and will save all who come to God by him. Pray to him, dear."

"But, Margaret, I do say my prayers to myself very often now, but I don't feel a bit happier."

Margaret tried to explain to Ada, as well as she knew how, and in the gentlest and tenderest manner, that she might not hurt

* John iii. 16.

her feelings, that saying prayers and praying were very different; that it was one thing to repeat words with the lips, and another to pray with the heart, though the lips might not have power so much as to move. She tried to speak to her, too, of the infinite love and compassion of the Saviour, and repeated from the Scriptures some of his invitations to sinners to come to him and live.

It was the first time in her life that Ada had ever been spoken to in this way; she had, doubtless, heard the same truths in church, but never with any heed or desire to understand what they meant. She now listened to them as to a thing she had never been told before, seeming to drink in almost with astonishment every word that Margaret uttered. From this time Margaret was in her room more than ever; Ada never seemed easy when she was absent. Mrs. Craven could not help observing this, and felt almost jealous that she should sometimes seem to prefer having Margaret by her side even to her. She considered it, however, as one of

the whims incident to illness, and while she remarked to herself the increasing patience with which her darling endured her pain and suffering, little supposed she had learned to do so from the simple teaching of the quiet gentle sister whom she loved so much to see by her side.

Ada still continued to fluctuate, appearing sometimes better and sometimes worse, as she had done from the commencement of her illness. One day when she was very ill, but lying on the sofa, her mother came in and sat down beside her. Margaret was on the sofa at her feet.

"My precious Ada," said her mother, "how glad I shall be when we can get you into warmer air; you will soon be better then."

"Do you think I shall *ever* get better, mamma?" said Ada, with a searching look.

"Get better, my darling!" repeated Mrs. Craven, "of course you will, what should hinder your getting better? you will be quite well when the spring comes."

"But the spring is coming now, mamma," said Ada, quietly; "see, Margaret has brought

me some primroses this morning, and the spring always comes with them, you know. No, mamma dear," she added, looking up in her mother's face, "I do not think I shall ever get better; I do not think I shall be here when the roses come."

"Ada, my child, you must not talk so," said her mother, "indeed you will get better soon; you are very poorly to-day; there, let me shake up your pillow, and you will feel brighter when you have had a little sleep."

Ada hid her face in her pillow. After a time she appeared to be sleeping. Mrs. Craven rose very softly and beckoned Margaret out of the room.

"Margaret," said she, "is it you who have put these notions into Ada's head?"

"No mamma," replied Margaret almost weeping, "indeed I did not. Ada told me ever so long ago that she did not think that she should get better."

"If she says anything of the kind again," said her mother, "I desire that you will immediately begin to talk of something else. No wonder she should seem so poorly to-day,

poor child, if she has such dreary thoughts in her head."

"But, mamma, if Ada *should* die," said Margaret, the tears running down her cheeks as she spoke.

"She will not die," said the mother with passionate earnestness, and, hastening away to her own room, she closed the door, and burst into an agony of bitter and murmuring grief.

Margaret stole softly back to the sofa. "I was not asleep," whispered Ada; "read me some verses out of the Bible, Margaret."

Ada's sick room was not the first that Margaret had ever been in; she had often, in by-gone days, accompanied her aunt Ellen in her visits of mercy to the sick and afflicted, and had often listened while she read to them from the word of God. She remembered that the 14th chapter of the Gospel by John, was a favourite chapter with her on these occasions. She opened her Bible and read part of it to Ada.

"Oh Margaret," said Ada, "I should not

be afraid to die, if I thought Jesus was preparing a place for *me*."

Margaret's pent up tears now flowed forth; she threw her arms about Ada, and said, "Ada, dear Ada, he *is* preparing a place, a mansion for you, and all who love him, and you love him now, Ada, don't you?"

"I try to love him," said Ada, "and I think I do sometimes; and then sometimes I think I would so much rather live than go to him, it seems so hard to me to have to leave papa, and mamma, and you, Margaret, now I love you so dearly."

Margaret wept bitterly, kissing Ada again and again; then she said, "But Jesus knows you cannot help it, Ada, and if you ask him he will teach you to love him more than anybody."

"I wish I could," said Ada; "Margaret, do you really think that Jesus has forgiven me?"

"Oh! Ada, how can you ask me? Don't you remember how he forgave all people who were sorry for their sins, and looked

to him, when he was on earth, even the poor thief; and he is just as kind now, you know."

"Yes," said Ada, "so he is, but sometimes I forget that; and I think that when I stand before the great throne, and he asks me what I did when I was on earth to show that I loved him, I shall not be able to say a word; because, you know, I never have loved him all my life, or done any thing to try to please him like you. Aunt Ellen taught you to love him when you were quite little."

"Yes," said Margaret; "but I did not love him either for a long time. See how wicked I was after I came here; I did not try to please him the least bit."

"But you tried more than I did," replied Ada, "and now I cannot do anything."

"Yes you can, dear Ada. I have often heard aunt Ellen tell people who were ill, that if they tried to follow his example, and bear their pain patiently, and not murmur, he would account it quite as much done for him as if they were well, and could do other things."

"I never thought of that before," said Ada; "it is very kind of him."

"I think," Margaret went on, "that aunt Ellen meant, that God never expects people to do more than they are able, and that if they are patient, and gentle, and unmurmuring, it is all they are able to do, and so he will be pleased with them accordingly."

"I think I understand it," said Ada. "Margaret, how glad I am that you came here, I think that it must have been God who sent you on purpose to teach me; kiss me, Margaret. I will try to go to sleep now. I will try to be patient. Remind me, Margaret, when you see me get cross and murmuring."

Margaret kissed her, and as she saw a sweet slumber steal over her weary eyelids, while a soft smile played around her yet beautiful lips, she thought of her aunt Ellen's words, that God had taken her from her quiet home in the Thatched Cottage, and placed her where she now was for some wise and good purpose of his own, and she lifted up her heart and thanked him for

his goodness, in having enabled her to be a help and comfort to poor Ada; and then she thought how pleasant it would be if Ada could get better, and live on, and love her as she did now, and she prayed earnestly that she might get better. But when she recollected how many things there would be to tempt her, and to lead her astray from the right path, it seemed to her as if her wish were a wrong one, and she prayed again, but this time only that whether God saw fit for her to recover or not, he would at last take her to live with him for ever, and permit them, if they might not continue together on earth, to love each other again and for evermore in heaven.

CHAPTER XIII.

BRIGHT sunshine at length visited the hedge-rows and mossy banks, adorning them with the wrinkled leaves and pale blossoms of the primrose, and the delicate flower of the graceful harebell, while here and there, in sheltered nooks, peeped forth violets blue and white, making their presence known, like that humility of which they are the emblem, only by the sweet fragrance which they cast around. The cuckoo was heard in the woods; the lark again rose above the green fields, singing as he soared; the honey-bee was once more on the wing; the butterfly had burst its dark winter shroud, and sported gladsomely in the bright sunny air; and pleasant sights and pleasant sounds were abroad in the earth. But Ada was not abroad to see or to hear them.

Paler, weaker, more wasted than ever, she still lay upon her silk couch, and Margaret still sat by her side, performing, with ever ready and gentle hand, each little office that she might require.

Mrs. Craven was not in the room so constantly as she had been at first, for she often went away to weep, to weep bitter and repining tears. It was no longer possible for her to hide from herself the fact that Ada would die—yes, Ada, her pride, her darling, the child on whom she had built her strongest and brightest hopes. Worldly pleasures were nothing to her now; from the attempted consolations of her worldly friends she turned in disgust. But there was no resignation within her, no submission to the will of God; her heart knew no feeling but that of bitter repining grief. It was not hers to look upward, and with the eye of faith to behold the bright home already prepared for her child; it was not hers to say with believing trust, "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me;" no, nothing was before her but the one terrible certainty

that she should lose Ada; the terrible words, "Ada will die," were ever sounding in her ears, and ringing their doleful knell in her heart.

As to Mr. Craven, he came to see Ada every evening when he returned home, and, if she were not asleep, every morning before he went to his daily engagements. He too, saw that she was dying, but he tried to drive the thought from his mind, resolved, if possible, not to believe so terrible a truth until it was actually forced upon him.

But to Ada, the thought of death was no longer terrible. Not unheard had been Margaret's many earnest prayers, not unanswered the feeble and broken petitions which had risen from her own heart. Hard had been the struggle which the love of life and the dread of death had awakened within her. It was long ere a believing view of the Saviour brought a calm over the troubled waters of her soul; but at length it came, and led by his heavenly teaching (for save the simple instructions of Margaret she had no

other guide) she was at length enabled to rest sweetly on that gentle Saviour who loves to gather his lambs in his arms, and to carry them in his bosom.

It was only to Margaret that Ada could find courage to speak of these things; she often wished to do so to her father and mother, but could not. At length, one day, her mother came into the room when Margaret was reading to her; she had a new book in her hand.

"What is that you are reading to Ada, Margaret?" said she.

"'The Pilgrim's Progress,' mamma," replied Margaret, "Ada asked me to read it."

"You should not read such dull books as that to her," replied Mrs. Craven. "See Ada, love," she continued, "Lady F— has been in to inquire after you, and has brought you this book full of funny pictures to make you laugh."

"Thank you, mamma," said Ada, taking the book without opening it, "but I do not want to laugh now, it hurts me so, and I like to hear about Christian and his troubles

very much, it makes me forget the pain in my chest sometimes."

"You are a dear, patient, little angel," said her mother, fondly kissing her.

"No, mamma, I am not an angel, because angels are quite good," said Ada, "and I am not patient either, very often, mamma. I wish *you* would read to me sometimes."

"Well, my darling, so I will whenever you like," replied her mother; "shall I read to you now, one of these stories?"

"No, mamma, not that; Margaret will tell you what. I will not hear any more about Christian now; will you find the place in the Bible about the beautiful city, and give it to mamma?"

These were two of Ada's favourite chapters;* she could not understand the whole of them, but those parts which she did understand, she knew almost by heart, so often had Margaret read them to her. Margaret opened the Bible and gave it to her mother, and for the first time in her life Mrs. Craven's voice was employed in

* Rev. xxi. xxii.

reading the word of God to her children. At first it faltered, but at length she grew calm. Ada closed her eyes and listened; when the chapters were finished, she opened them and said—

"Mamma, I think I am very soon going to live in that beautiful city."

Mrs. Craven hid her face and wept almost convulsively; she had never before thus given way in Ada's presence.

"Mamma," said Ada, reaching out her little white hand, "mamma, do not cry so, do not cry; I am not afraid to go, indeed I am not."

"Ada," said she at length, "my own darling, surely you do not wish to go away and leave me."

"No, mamma," replied Ada, quite calmly, "I do not want to leave you, and yet I think for some things it is better to die than live; and if God calls me I must go, you know; and we shall be separated only for a little while; you, and papa, and Margaret, will come soon, and then we shall all be there together."

"But Ada, my darling," said her mother still weeping, "you would rather get better and live."

"No, I do not think I would," replied Ada, in the same low quiet voice, "not now. I wished very much to get better once, but that was before Margaret told me about the Lord Jesus, and how God would forgive me and take me to heaven for his sake; no, I do not wish to get better now, mamma, only to stay with you; for if I did perhaps I might be tempted to grow wicked again, and to forget God."

"You never were wicked, my Ada," said her mother, "you were always good."

"No, mamma, I was not," replied Ada; "I have often disobeyed and vexed you and been unkind to Margaret, but she has forgiven me, and you will too, will you not, mamma?"

"My darling, do not talk so," said the weeping mother; "what shall I do if I lose you?"

"But, mamma dear, you will not lose me; it will only be for a little while, and then you

will come—come to me; you know if—if you love Jesus, mamma, he will prepare a mansion for you; and, mamma, I will watch for you by the gate of the golden city, for you and papa and Margaret—yes, you will all come." Mrs. Craven again wept. Ada whispered something to Margaret, who left the room; then after a few minutes she said—

"Mamma, will you be angry if I say something?"

"How could I be angry at anything you say, my Ada?" replied her mother; "what is it, my darling?"

"I only wanted to say, dear mamma," she continued, throwing her thin arm round her mother's neck, "that I think, if people want to go to heaven, they must not love the things of the earth too much, because, you see, mamma, there is not time for us to do all that God wants us to do, and to amuse and please ourselves so very much too. Mamma, you cannot think how different everything seems to me to what it used to do; it does not seem as if anything was of any consequence at all

but loving Christ and getting safe to heaven; because you know, mamma dear, we only stay upon earth such a little time, but we shall live afterwards for ever and ever."

"Ada," said her mother, "I have been very wrong, but you must live, my darling, and teach me how to do better."

"No, mamma," said Ada, "I am not good enough to teach you; besides, I know I must go when God calls me, but God will teach you himself if you ask him. And Margaret, mamma, you will love Margaret, will you not? Oh, mamma, Margaret is a great deal better than I am; she always has been, only you loved me best because you had never been parted from me."

"Yes, Ada, I did love you best," said her mother, "and perhaps that is why God is going to take you from me."

"I don't know," said Ada; "but now you will love Margaret for me and herself too, will you not? Mamma, if it had not been for Margaret I should never have known anything—I should never have known how to get to heaven;" and, exhausted with the long

talking, she sank back on her pillow and closed her eyes.

"Should never have known how to get to heaven:" Ada little thought the pang of bitter self-reproach which shot through her mother's heart at those few words. Was it so? Had she then, while so carefully nurturing and tending and adorning the beautiful outward body, while so ceaselessly watching over the worldly and temporal interests of her child, forgotten or utterly neglected to nurture, beautify, and train aright the immortal spirit within? Yes, such was the sad truth which those few short words had revealed to her, and with a heart tried by remorseful feelings, which still rose up in proud rebellion against God, Mrs. Craven retired to her chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

After this, Ada faded rapidly. Her pain left her, and her cough became much less troublesome; but still she faded. One evening, when she had been sleeping much longer than usual, she awoke suddenly, and seeing Margaret, said, "Margaret, dear, ask Susan to fetch mamma, but do not go away."

"I am here, love," said Mrs. Craven, standing by the bed.

"And papa," said Ada, "I want papa too. I want to kiss him."

Mr. Craven soon came, and, sitting down by the bedside, put his arm under the pillow, raising her a little, as he was wont to do.

"Papa," said Ada, turning her brilliant eyes upon him, "I love you so very much; kiss me."

"My darling," he said, as he stooped

forward and kissed her, "how are you to-night?"

"I am very happy," said Ada, but her voice was exceedingly low; it sank almost to a whisper as she added—

"Papa, may I ask one favour of you?"

"Yes, my love," he replied, "what is it, Ada?"

"When I am dead," she continued, speaking quite calmly, "will you never laugh at Margaret for liking to read the Bible, and to go to church, and to do good things? and papa," and here she paused a moment, as if uncertain whether she might go on, "sometimes—sometimes—on a Sunday afternoon, if you have time, will you let her read it to you as she has done to me?——it will remind you of me, you know; she can read to you about the beautiful city where I am going to live."

Mr. Craven hid his face and wept like a child, but Ada was still perfectly calm.

"You remember what I told you, mamma, do you not?" said she, stretching out her hand to her mother; "how I would watch

for you at the gate? Margaret, you will remind mamma sometimes, will you not? and you will always think of me when the primroses come; and now I will kiss you all and bid you good night," she added, "before I go to sleep."

They all kissed her, and she again settled herself upon her pillow. Mr. Craven was so overcome that he went away. Her mother and Margaret still stayed by her. In about a quarter of an hour they thought she was sleeping; but soon after she opened her eyes and said, dreamily, "Mamma,— Margaret,— remember,— I shall be there watching for you,—do not be long,—Jesus will be there too,"——and then she closed her eyes again; they heard a gentle sigh, and thought she was again sleeping. And so she was, but it was the long last sleep. Angels' wings had long been hovering around her, and now, passing thus gently and peacefully, had they borne her ransomed and purified spirit to the beautiful and heavenly city in which she had so longed to dwell.

For days Mrs. Craven would see no one; Mr. Craven, too, shut himself up in his room, Margaret being the only person permitted to go in and out, and even to her he dared trust himself to say but little. Their Ada, their beautiful Ada, was gone. Neither beauty, nor riches, nor love had been able to keep her from the iron grasp of death. She had faded as a flower before their eyes; all their efforts to save her had proved unavailing. Mrs. Craven made no secret of her rebellious feelings; she could not see the dispensation, she said; she could not see *why* Ada should have died; she had everything to make her happy in this world; why, then, should she have been taken from it?

Mr. Craven did not speak in this way, but so utter a stranger was he to the ways in which God often sees fit to deal with his erring creatures, and thus to draw them to himself, that the language of his heart was, in all probability, almost the same; the only difference between them was that although he had unquestionably thought more of Ada

than of Margaret, yet he loved her fondly too, and thus his heart was not left quite without an idol.

Poor Margaret, she too felt very lonely and sad indeed; she missed Ada for herself as one whom she had learned to love dearly and tenderly; she missed performing the thousand little offices which she had required of her every day, almost every hour of the day; she missed having no one to watch, and to think about, and to care for; and, more than all, she missed the sweet words of peace and truth, and hope, with which the last weeks of Ada's young life had been beautified.

There was a little Testament which Ada had been accustomed to keep beneath her pillow, and in which, although she was unable to read herself, she constantly made Margaret mark any little passage which struck her, or which she liked particularly. A few days before her death she had made Margaret promise that she could give this Testament to her papa. She had now been dead some days, and yet Margaret had been unable to do so, indeed she could not find

courage even to mention Ada's name to her father. So fearful was she of again breaking open the flood-gates of his sorrow. Sometimes she thought that she would take it to her mother, and ask her to give it to him; but then she had promised Ada to do so herself, and this thought deterred her; so she carried it about wherever she went, until a fitting opportunity might, as she hoped, occur.

She went very often to look at Ada, frequently many times in one day. She knew where Susan kept the key of the room, and so she used to take it and go in without saying a word to any one. Ada looked so calm, peaceful, and beautiful, that although she had never seen death before, she could not help feeling a strange kind of pleasure in gazing upon her.

One afternoon—it was the day before that appointed for the funeral—she went out to look at the little gardens which had belonged to her and Ada. They were untidy and overgrown with weeds, for she had no heart to do anything to them for the last few weeks.

She stooped down to pull up some chickweed which was choking a root of double violets which she remembered Ada had planted the spring before, and in so doing saw that her monthly rose-tree which she had also planted, and which stood in a sheltered corner, had on it a single opening blossom, the first rose of summer. She recollected what Ada had said about being gone before the roses came, and gathering it, with a few lilies of the valley from her own garden, formed them into a bouquet, and returned straight to the house.

She went upstairs without meeting any one, not even Susan; then taking the key from its hiding place, she unlocked the door and entered into the room, closing it softly behind her. That room, which she had once shared with Ada, but which, when that night was passed away, would contain Ada's form no more. There stood the white coffin, but as yet tenantless, for Ada still lay upon the bed, looking, Margaret thought, as she silently unpinned the curtain, and removed the handkerchief

from her face, more happy and beautiful than ever. She placed the rose and the lilies in her bosom, once more kissed the snowy brow around which the long brown ringlets still fell, then sat down by the bedside and looked at her. Her back was to the door; she heard some one open it softly and come in, but thinking it was Susan who often followed her in in this way, she did not look round. But soon she felt a hand upon her shoulder; it was her father's; and for the first time he and she together gazed upon Ada since her death: she threw herself into his arms and burst into tears. He kissed her tenderly, and still putting his arm round her sat down.

"So you are not afraid to come and look at poor Ada, Margaret," said he, when she had wiped away her tears, and with one arm round his neck stood by him, still gazing at the pale form before her.

"Afraid, papa? no," said she; "how can I be afraid?"

"Some people are afraid even to look upon

death, Margaret," said he, "but you do not seem to know what fear is. What were you thinking of when I came into the room?"

"I was thinking, papa, how very beautiful Ada will be at the resurrection."

"What do you mean, Margaret?" said her father, starting a little at words which he evidently did not expect to hear.

"Well, papa, you know we shall then all have bodies given to us much more beautiful than those we now have, so only think how very lovely Ada will be, and how glad we shall be when we see her again."

Mr. Craven was silent for a minute or two; then he said, "Where did you learn all this, Margaret?"

"Papa," she replied, "aunt Ellen taught me; but it is all in the Bible; all about the resurrection, and Jesus coming again; it is in the fifteenth chapter of the 1st of Corinthians; I do not quite understand it all, but I used to read it to Ada sometimes, and she liked it very much."

"You think Ada is gone to heaven then, Margaret?" said her father, as if he wished to see what answer she would make.

"Oh, papa," she replied, looking at him as though to read in his countenance if he had the least doubt, "I am sure of it, quite sure. What should we do, papa, if we were not sure?"

"I do not know, Margaret," he replied. She felt awed at the solemnity of his manner; then, taking Ada's little Testament from her pocket, she said timidly—

"Papa, this is Ada's Testament; she told me I was to be sure to give it to you, and to tell you that the verses she liked best are where the marks are; this is the chapter I told you about; see, Ada marked that herself. Papa, would you mind reading a little of it to me?"

"I would rather that you read it to me, Margaret," he replied, and his voice was thick and husky as he spoke, "let me hear you."

She obeyed, and there, in the mute presence of the dead, read with a calm, low, steady voice, from beginning to end, the

sublime chapter from which she had drawn the comforting assurance of which she had spoken.

"Margaret," said he, when she ceased, "do you understand all that?"

"No, papa, there are some verses which I cannot understand at all."

"And yet you like it," he said.

"I like what I *do* understand," said Margaret; "do you not, papa?"

"Margaret," said he, taking the little Testament in his hand, "you are yet but a little girl, but you know far more than your father, who has lived so long in the world, and who ought to have been able to teach you. I thank God that in your aunt Ellen you have had a better teacher, and I make you this promise, here before poor Ada, who asked it of me, that I will never again laugh at anything you do or say: go on as you have begun, Margaret. Whatever I may think myself, my desire for you is, that you may never be led to forsake those truths, which I now see are alone able to give peace in the hour of death, or

true consolation to those whom we leave behind."

Margaret leaned against his bosom, but did not speak for some time; at length she said, but without looking up—"Then you will read Ada's Testament, papa?"

But he did not reply, he only kissed her again, very tenderly, and left the room.

Weeks passed on, but the violence of Mrs. Craven's grief seemed unabated; at length it brought on a dangerous and alarming illness. For many days, almost for weeks, her life hung as it were upon a thread, which any moment might be snapped asunder. To Margaret's great joy, her aunt Ellen, whose presence was always welcome wherever she went, but more especially in the house of mourning, was again their guest. She devoted the greater part of her time to Mrs. Craven, and during those long, dark hours of sickness, of sorrow, almost of despair, so gently did she probe the cankering wound, so wisely did she administer counsel, advice, and consolation, that the proud spirit was at length, by God's

grace, bent and softened beneath her patient teaching; and when, after many months of suffering, Mrs. Craven once more emerged from her sick chamber, it was with a heart, which, though it still felt the rents which sorrow and suffering, both bodily and mental, had left behind them, was in a measure bound up and healed.

Margaret's gentleness and affection had in no small measure conduced to this, and every day both her father and mother found her winding more closely round their hearts, and more than supplying the place of her whom they had lost; and Mrs. Craven, instead of any longer repining that God had taken Ada to himself, learned to thank him for so doing, in that he had not only saved her child from the pomps, and vanities, and temptations to which she would have been exposed in this wicked world, but that also, by this stroke of his afflicting rod, she had herself, though bitter had been the lesson, at length been taught to set her affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.

As Margaret grew up she no longer needed to oppose the wishes of those dearest to her in following out those principles which her beloved aunt Ellen had first planted in her heart; and though she still occasionally met with temptations to forsake the narrow path, which she had early learned to tread, she was, by God's grace, enabled to withstand them, and to continue with all lowliness and meekness, to walk worthy the vocation wherewith she was called. The Thatched Cottage she ever continued to look upon as her second home, and never visited it without thanking God for the instruction she had first received beneath its roof.

And now, dear young reader, farewell. Should this simple history of Margaret's trials and temptations, and how she was enabled to overcome them, prove useful to any who may be seeking to tread the same narrow path, it will not have been written in vain.

We have endeavoured to describe her

as she was, not as she was not. Her numerous faults and failings show her far from perfection, and how, as long as she leaned upon her own strength, forgetting to seek Divine aid and guidance, she was utterly unable to overcome them. While her subsequent stedfastness and uprightness amidst many temptations, may be traced entirely to that gracious assistance which, by earnest prayer, and by constant watchfulness over herself, she sought and obtained.

To those who are apt to set too great a value upon personal beauty and external advantages, poor Ada's death-bed may show how utterly valueless are these to bring peace at the last. Beauty, talent, and wealth are all of them God's gifts, and to be valued accordingly; but the inner Beauty of the Heart, even the gifts and graces bestowed by God's Holy Spirit, and cultivated with an earnest desire, on our part, to please him, is that alone which can stand the test of life, of death, and of eternity.

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